

FINAL REPORT

**Youth Empowerment and Health Understanding
A Think Tank on Youth Health in the Atlantic Region**

September 1998

**Prepared for
Health Canada
Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Atlantic**

**by
Holistic Community Pursuits, Halifax**

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YEAHU: The Think Tank on Youth Empowerment and Health Understanding and this report would not have been possible without the energy, time and commitment of many

First and foremost we would like to thank all of the people who participated in the scan, and particularly everyone who participated in the Think Tank itself. They deserve thank you for the work that was put into the Think Tank discussions and their ongoing efforts to youth development. It never would have happened without their enthusiasm and energy. All of the good stuff is theirs - all of the errors are ours.

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! Let's do it again sometime!

Fletcher and Kelly Thomas
: Community Pursuits, Halifax

Executive Summary

When taking on youth initiatives, agencies and organizations have traditionally involved youth at a very superficial level or not at all. Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Atlantic (HPPB) organized a consultative process to get some ideas on how best to work with youth. The result was YEAHU (Youth Empowerment and Health Understanding) a three month planning, research, Think Tank and documentation process that took place in the spring of 1998.

Holistic Community Pursuits, a Halifax-based consulting firm, was contracted to coordinate this work. The first step was to establish a Youth Advisory Committee to guide the process at every step of the way. This committee was made up of seven young people from the four Atlantic provinces. The committee met by conference call to plan the Think Tank, and conduct a scan of organizations. They co-facilitated a three day Think Tank with thirty four people (seventeen youth and seventeen adults), and contributed to the writing of this report.

At the Think Tank youth and adults worked together to come up with the best ways to address youth health and encourage youth empowerment. The deliberations at the Think Tank resulted in a number of suggestions and recommendations.

It was agreed that an approach to impact the determinants of health for youth needs to include promoting community responsibility, valuing children, meeting basic needs and understanding health from a population health framework. This approach would also have to include valuing difference and diversity and working to eliminate prejudice and racism. It would have to help in both the short term and long term with problems in the physical environment.

Some of the initiatives and directions that are needed are one's that promote a positive image of youth, emphasize positive social factors, encourage self esteem, and encourage access to a variety of services and opportunities. Specific initiatives around mentoring programs, promoting peer counselling and organizing stress management, time management and leadership symposiums for youth are also highly recommended. Work with schools was considered essential because this is where young people spend a lot of their time. Participants also agreed that initiatives need to support families and youth together, not as separate entities. From an organizational perspective participants said it is important to ensure consistency, secure resources, develop linkages and to collaborate intersectorally.

The suggested mechanisms for encouraging participation include: taking the risk and asking youth to get involved, having an effective process; and providing for practical needs. Working together requires valuing principles such as: mutual respect; faith; trust;

openness; honesty; acceptance of responsibilities; and recognition of diversity.

Priority directions were recommended to HPPB and partners to help find common ground, break down the generation gap, to promote shared responsibility for youth, to provide ongoing sustainable support, to get out information about youth empowerment and youth understanding, and to develop policies requiring youth involvement.

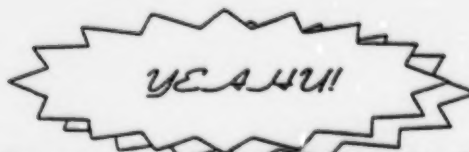
The priority recommendations are:

- * In order to better serve youth, youth need to be involved at all levels and should be key players in the decision making. Health Promotion and Programs Branch need to focus their action around groups that have already involved youth as decision makers and use those organizations as models for engaging other communities seeking to empower youth.

- * In order to work collaboratively with youth in the design and development of programs and policies, HPPB first needs to consider youth as equal partners in the process of better addressing youth issues. Health Promotion needs to form a reference committee made up of a diverse group of youth from the Atlantic. This group should be diverse in age (13-24), geography, race, culture, creed, religion, gender, sexual orientation and levels of physical and mental ability.

- * An initial step for Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Atlantic would be to promote networking amongst youth organizations to further develop collaborative, diverse, and well-being of all youth.

The YEAHU Think Tank process was a successful one. Both for what it produced for the process of youth and adults working cooperatively together; a model that can be used by others is essential to recognize that healthy youth are confident, they feel empowered and in control of their lives. When focussing on initiatives that address youth health the key is to find out why youth may feel powerless, unsure and out of control. To do this it is essential to confer with youth themselves, and ask them about the struggles they face each day, ask them for the answers to the problems and invest time, resources and commitment in solving change and meeting their needs. If youth are seen as resources and assets rather than problem, a step will be made towards youth empowerment and understanding.



Youth Empowerment And Health Understanding

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1.0 Planning, Research and The Think Tank Process

For many years government departments, community groups and not-for-profit organizations have been focussing much of their attention and resources around 'youth health problems'. However, finding ways to positively effect youth health is not simple. Youth participation in decision making for youth health initiatives has not always been a priority. The solution is never an easy one. It involves the reevaluating, reviewing and revamping of old policies and mechanisms. To effectively address youth concerns consultation with youth is a must.

This document reports on the results of YEAHU (Youth Empowerment and Health Understanding): A Think-Tank on Youth Health Issues which was held by Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Atlantic Region. This initiative was a consultation with youth and individuals working with youth in the four Atlantic Provinces. The process included the initial research and the planning of a three-day Think Tank. This report is aimed at offering tools to organizations, groups and government departments for empowering youth to be part of decision making. It is hoped that the information will be useful to those seeking to work intersectorally with youth to impact on the determinants that effect their health. The report contains this introduction, a report on the research scan, discussion of the Think-Tank with participants' recommendations and evaluations and a conclusion.

Youth Advisory Planning Committee

In late March 1998 David Fletcher and Kelly Thomas, of Holistic Community Pursuits a Halifax-based consulting firm, were hired by Health Canada - Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Atlantic to coordinate YEAHU: A Think-Tank on Youth Health Issues. The process began by establishing a Youth Advisory Planning Committee that would work cooperatively with Holistic Community Pursuits to plan the process. This Advisory Team was developed to act as a consultative body that would offer advice and make decisions to ensure that the work would be youth-friendly and useful for all who were involved. The YEAHU Youth Advisory Team members were principal players in the development of the entire project.

Forming Youth Committees

Criteria

Experienced working with youth-driven or youth service organizations at the decision making level.

Remuneration

An honorarium of \$25.00 to be paid following each conference call.

Commitments

Able to participate in weekly conference calls and in Think-Tank.

Key people from youth-serving and/or youth-driven organizations were contacted for suggestions of candidates to develop the youth advisory committee. A letter was sent to each of these key contacts outlining the purpose of the Think-Tank and some criteria for committee members. (Appendix 1) It was important to the development of the whole process that the members of the Youth Advisory Committee are dedicated to and interested in youth related issues and activities.

Once names were gathered, youth were then contacted directly and invited to join the Committee. A team of six was envisioned - one youth from each province, one youth from the First Nations community and one from the Francophone community. Based on a recommendation from one of the youth a seventh member was added so that both Newfoundland and Labrador would be represented. Over the course of the planning, two members were unable to continue their involvement and suggested others that could take

their place. (Appendix 2.) The Team, along with David Fletcher and Kelly Thomas met on a weekly basis via conference calling. Having the conference calls so frequently helped to create a sense of commitment among the Advisory Team members.

The YEAHU Youth Advisory Team was responsible for many decisions during the planning of the Think-Tank. One of the first major tasks for the Team was to name the Think-Tank. The name would be youth-friendly and in user-friendly language. YEAHU: Youth Empowerment and Health Understanding was the name they came up with. This shared task brought the members together and helped to build group ownership. Other major contributions of the Youth Advisory Team involved setting youth-friendly norms for the weekly conference call meetings, offering names to be contacted in the research scan, performing scan interviews, selecting Think-Tank participants, planning the Think-Tank agenda, co-facilitating the Think-Tank, and documenting the whole process in this report.

1.2 The Scan

The research scan was very useful. Fifty-three youth and others who work with youth were interviewed about what youth issues needed to be addressed at the Think-Tank and how Health Promotion and Programs Branch could better approach youth initiatives. The Youth Advisory Team selected many of the scan participants, conducted several interviews, and were involved in the summarizing and interpretation of these findings. The background documents developed as a result of the scan were circulated to all Think Tank participants in advance and helped to set the context for the discussions at the Think Tank. The following are the major findings of the scan:

- The health and well-being of young people is determined by a web of many factors. These factors are intricately interwoven. Both youth and adults interviewed said that social support networks, coping skills, income, employment, education, culture, physical environment and healthy child development are all factors that can positively or negatively affect the health of youth.
- The most effective mechanisms for involving and empowering youth are the need for respect and the avoidance of tokenism. From all of the respondents there was also general agreement that there is not one approach to youth empowerment, but organizers must provide multiple ways of helping youth get involved and connected.
- Working intersectorally to address the needs of youth is essential. A number of people said that a big part of this is changing attitudes and traditional ways that people work - whether it is in government, community groups or the private sector. Respondents felt that it is a real challenge in government to work intersectorally or interdepartmentally.

A summary of the scan methodology and results can be found in Section 2 of this report.

1.3 Selecting Think Tank Participants

A critical task performed by the Advisory Team was recommending and inviting possible Think Tank participants. The decision was made to ensure there were an equal number of youth and adults and at the same time to represent the diversity of the Atlantic Region. In discussions the Team came to realize representing this diversity would need to include

geographic representation, representation by age, language, race, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, representation of different levels of government, the voluntary and not-for-profit sector, and representation of youth serving and youth driven organizations. As the Team learned more about the population health approach and intersectoral collaboration, they recognized that there should be representatives from the health, environment, employment, justice, recreation as well as other sectors. Due to limited resources, only 30-35 participants could be invited.

The first step used in this selection process was developing a quota system (Appendix 3) for the kind of people who it was thought should attend the Think Tank. The quota system forced organizers to aggressively recruit people from diverse backgrounds. Eventually a network of contacts was established which included a diverse group of people. The "quota system" was based on census data and helped the organizers to represent people at the Think Tank according to demographic proportions. On numerous occasions the team reviewed the list of participants to see if the diversity of the region was being represented as it had been envisioned. This system was difficult to implement considering only thirty people could be invited to the Think Tank. This process was far from ideal, but it was one way to ensure that the Team was thinking about who should participate in a very broad way. One policy decision that the Team made was that it might be useful to 'over represent' groups who have traditionally been left out of the decision making. This approach was to help promote diversity and to avoid tokenism.

Each team member made recommendations for both youth and adults they thought should be invited. Added to this list were individuals who had been recommended during the scan process or by Health Canada. Dozens of phone calls were being made right up until the last minute to try and ensure there was a diverse group, particularly in terms of geographic representation and an equal number of youth and adults. Strategically the team had some success in this area - many of the positive evaluative comments were about the diversity of the group, but regrettably some groups were still under represented either because of unavoidable last minute cancellations or simply because of the short lead up time to plan the Think Tank.

1.4 Think-Tank

The Youth Advisory Team developed the Think-Tank design. This design process was an evolutionary one: three weeks before the Think Tank, Team members brain stormed content and specific areas of discussion; two weeks before, the Team went over processes and possible activities that could take place; in the final week these content and process ideas were tentatively put together into a Think Tank design. This design process was chosen to be empowering for the youth and to be flexible to the needs of all participants. There were decisions made about who was willing to facilitate individual activities. Most members of the Advisory Team had planned or had been involved in the planning of conferences similar to this one. They were excellent at adapting their ideas and experiences for YEAHU. The youth facilitation was a success. Youth were accepted as co-facilitators, partners and special resources. Participants at the Think-Tank were very pleased with the youth participation and ownership of the Think Tank. Resources such as *The Youth-Friendly Guide: The Youth Guidebook to Policy for Intergenerational Partnerships* published by the Canadian Environmental Network's Youth Caucus, *Working with Young People: A guide to youth*

participation in decision-making by the Canadian Mental Health Association and *Basics & Tools: A collection of popular education resources and activities* by O's Education Department were some of the materials reviewed in planning the agenda. The facilitation and final decisions about the agenda were made during the weekend itself.

Many adjustments were made to the agenda during the Think Tank weekend. This was necessary to respond to the needs of the participants who were there and to build on the collective energy of what was happening. The planned agenda was designed to allow flexibility that the Team felt was needed. This flexibility required a lot of trust in the entire group of participants and in the abilities of the Team members as facilitators. This flexibility added to the success of the Think Tank.

1.5 Documenting Results

During the Think Tank Team members and other participants took responsibility for taking notes on sessions. These notes, copies of worksheets that were used, and flip chart notes were collated and these formed the basis of this report. David Fletcher and Kelly Thomas worked on a couple early drafts of the report which were then shared with Advisory Team members and edited to produce a draft that was submitted to Health Canada. Their comments and insights were then integrated to produce this final report. The purpose of the report is to capture the major discussions from the Think Tank, to present the suggestions and recommendations put forward, and to share the process that was followed.

To report the proceedings of the Think Tank itself, this document attempts to accurately reflect the discussions, the passion and the commitment all participants put in to sometimes sensitive and complex issues. As a more comprehensive report it attempts to go beyond that and capture a bit of "the story" and the process of YEAHU as it unfolded from initial formation of the committee to this final product. As the ultimate outcome of YEAHU it is intended to help give direction to Health Promotion and Programs in the Atlantic (and others) about working with youth on issues of health and empowerment.

2.0 Background Research - Key Learning from The Scan of Organizations

A research scan was done to provide background information for the Think-Tank. Fifty-three interviews were undertaken by Holistic Community Pursuits and the Youth Advisory Committee. This section describes the methodology, key learning and the conclusions from this scan.

2.1 Research Scan Methodology

As background and lead up to the Think Tank the Advisory Team conducted a scan of people, both youth and adults, involved in youth serving and youth driven organizations in the four Atlantic provinces. The purpose of the scan was threefold:

- To identify possible participants for the Think Tank;
- To provide background material for the Think Tank which identified a range of mechanisms for involving youth in decision making;
- To identified the youth issues that are important for the organizations and to link these to the health determinants.

Approach The scan, as part of the overall YEAHU initiative, was conducted using a participatory approach intended to model the potential of youth participation, to be respectful of knowledge and experience, and to be collaborative, useful and creative. A holistic, naturalistic approach was taken to the scan design. This approach is supported in the literature (e.g. Korrie De Koning & Marion Martin ed. Participatory Action Research in Health, 1996; Michael Bopp, Taking Time to Listen: Using Community Based Research to Build Programs, 1992. Elizabeth DePoy & Laura Gitlin, Introduction to Research: Multiple Strategies for Health and Human Services, 1994).

The Canadian Mental Health Association has adapted Roger Hart's levels of participation (1992) for youth organizations (*Working with Young People*, 1995). There are the following:

1. Youth are assigned to specific roles and informed, by adults, why they are being involved. Decisions are made by adults.
 2. Youth are consulted and informed, by adults, about how their input will be used. Decisions are made by adults.
 3. Adults initiate youth involvement and share decision making with youth.
 4. Youth initiate and direct projects and Sarre decision-making with adults.
 5. Youth and adults jointly initiate projects and share decision-making.
- A sixth category was added:*
6. Youth initiate and direct projects. Decisions are made by youth.

In the survey organizations were asked to identify themselves as youth serving or as youth driven. Youth-serving organizing would traditionally have levels of youth participation from levels one to four. Youth-driven organizations would favour participation levels five and six, with possible overlap with level four.

Scan Participants A total of fifty-three people were interviewed. These people were selected by the Advisory Team, and/or recommended by Health Canada. The criterion for

selection was that the individuals had extensive involvement with youth issues, and that there was diversity in terms of the types of organizations, ages, geographic areas and sectors people represented. Table 2.1 shows the breakdown of people interviewed and Appendix 4 lists all scan participants.

TABLE 2.1: PEOPLE INTERVIEWED FOR THE SCAN

	ALL PEOPLE INTERVIEWED			ALL PEOPLE INTERVIEWED		
	Adults	Youth	TOTAL	Youth-Serving Groups	Youth-Driven Groups	TOTAL
Nova Scotia	7	9	16	7	9	16
Prince Edward Island	4	6	10	5	5	10
New Brunswick	9	5	14	8	6	14
Newfoundland and Labrador	8	5	13	7	6	13
TOTAL	28	25	53	27	26	53

Methods for Information Gathering

The scan was conducted by members of the Advisory Team. Team members discussed what questions they thought it would be important to ask based on the objectives set by the Health Canada contract. They added issues and questions from their own experience they thought would be important. The Canadian Mental Health Association's publication "Working with Young People: a Guide to Youth Participation in Decision Making" was very useful in developing interview questions. Three major questions and a number of sub-questions were designed. The three major questions were:

1. What determines the health and well-being of young people?
2. What are the most effective mechanisms for involving and empowering youth?
3. How can we effectively work intersectorally to address the needs of youth?

A draft interview guide was prepared and reviewed by Health Canada. Interviews were chosen as the most effective means to gather in-depth, qualitative information. Each interview was approximately one and a half hours took place either in person or by phone. Brief interview notes were compiled in point form and interviewers wrote down "quotable quotes" that they thought captured the essence of the interviews.

Methods for Analysis Advisory Team members approached the analysis by looking to describe general themes, identify how interviewees comments related to each other, and to note any areas of major contradiction or disagreement. They hoped, through the series of interviews, to reveal the complexity of the issues, and to indicate a broad direction around the two issues of inquiry. This approach was considered particularly relevant for a background document, as more questions or ideas would emerge from reading the document that could be used to generate discussion at the Think Tank.

A thematic analysis was used to sort the information in the first seven interviews. This was done independently by two of the Advisory Team members, and they compared their results for consistency. They were then able to name major themes and issues. These major

themes and issues were then used as a starting point for coding and analysing other interviews as they were completed. If new themes or issues were identified in subsequent interviews they were added as a new code and previous interviews were reviewed and re-coded if necessary. Using this thematic approach the team attempted to be inclusive of all themes or issues mentioned by interviewees. Thematic comments were then collated and summarized.

The summary document was then shared with the Advisory Team to ensure that it reflected the major topics they had heard in their interviews. This was an opportunity to check that no important issues had been missed. The Advisory Team members' comments and a number of the participant quotes were then integrated into a draft of three background documents. The Advisory Team and Health Canada representatives reviewed these "Back grounders" and then they were circulated to Think Tank participants in advance of the event.

2.2 Key Learning from the Scan

The learning from the scan was captured in the Back grounders. These resources can be found in Appendix 5. These Back grounders were written to capture the wealth of ideas, issues and suggestions brought forward in the interviews. The content of what people said was considered important. The background documents were distributed to participants in advance of the Think-Tank which stimulated a lot of thought. The Back grounders provided some direct quotes and a lot of paraphrased comments from participants in a simple point form. The section below captures some of the key learning.

2.2.1 What Determines the Health and Well-being of Young People

Information gathered in the scan pointed clearly to the conclusion that the health and well-being of young people is determined by a web of many factors. These factors are intricately interwoven. A youth in one community will be affected by a certain group of factors that might be very different for another youth in another community. There was overwhelming evidence that support and encouragement from family, friends and the community is very important to a young person's health. Social Support Networks and the Social Environment are critical determinants of health for young people. One interviewee stated: "Education, employment and social support networks are important, but you can't really consider the determinants in isolation from each other, they are interconnected."

The consensus was that youth need to 'fit in'. Youth need support and they want to be involved. Many of the people interviewed expressed that youth must feel part of something - a group or an activity - and must have a sense of belonging, self worth and self esteem. Both adults and youth involved in the scan agreed that these are the most important health issues for youth.

Interviewees said those coping skills, income, employment, education, culture, physical environment and healthy child development are all factors that can positively or negatively affect the health of youth. Any groups or organizations with a mandate of working with youth need to take all of these factors into consideration to effectively address the needs presented

to them. Gender issues were also mentioned by a couple interviewees. Health services, and personal health practices were considered part of the complicated web, but none of the interviewees focussed on these two areas as priorities.

2.2.2 Youth Empowerment

In interviewing people about the most effective mechanisms for involving and empowering youth there was general agreement on many issues. The two most important issues mentioned by almost all interviewees, both youth and adults, were the need for respect and the avoidance of tokenism. As one person put it, their program works "because youth run the show and it is up to them what, how, why and when they want to do things."

There was agreement that it is essential to get youth to believe there ARE opportunities and that youth CAN develop their ideas and drive their own initiatives. People interviewed stated that it was crucial to have program flexibility. They believe this flexibility is essential to helping people who may not be served by "standard programs of recreation or developments" that have been designed for the majority.

From all of the respondents there was also general agreement that there is not one approach to youth empowerment, but organizers must provide multiple ways of getting involved and connected. What is needed is a non obstructive, non intrusive process, and an informal, primarily, unstructured environment. There was also overwhelming support that it is critical to find strengths and resources of youth, specifically teens, and to build on that. As one person said "If we approach youth as clients or consumers there will never be owners - we'll just build dependency - we need to use mutual education, mutual support and mutual aid. A peer model is the only thing that works and has sustainability."

A number of people also talked about youth control and that it is necessary for adults and professionals to let go and enable youth to have control and responsibility of their own process. All interviewees agreed with the following advice to adult supporters and resource people;

Believe in abilities of young people. Have a little magic in motivating young people - it takes a skill to make people feel welcome and invited, yet that is the most important thing. Be someone youth can trust. Friendship and mentoring are based on trust. Adults should not do activities for youth, but should follow-up with youth to do what youth ask them to do. It is important that adults do what they have agreed to do. Adults can share skills, contacts, experience and listen to and advise youth.

2.2.3 Working Intersectorally to Address the Needs of Youth

Everyone interviewed agreed that working intersectorally to address the needs of youth is essential. A number of people said that a big part of this is changing attitudes and traditional ways that people work - whether it is in government, community groups or the private sector. There was a consensus amongst interviewees that it is necessary to recognize the skills and abilities of people in different sectors and realize that what people can do together no one could do alone. It is important to consider the contributions youth make to all parts of society. One person stated, "We have to reach the point where we do not ask

ourselves should we work intersectorally. We must recognize that this is the only way our work will make a difference."

A few of the people interviewed who work directly in intersectoral initiatives said government and community organizations need to take the risk of sharing decision making power with youth and must get behind their ideas and action. Youth interviewed said they appreciate the advice, experience and inspiration they get from people in other sectors, but it must be seen as a two-way street. "Don't be afraid to give challenging assignments to young people, but make sure that you give yourself enough time to work WITH them." (Respondent).

Respondents felt that it is a real challenge in government to work intersectorally or interdepartmentally. Departments have their own mandates, and traditional ways of doing things. Unfortunately, intersectoral work is often considered an 'add on'. People agreed that the challenge is to break the silos of departments, and that to do this there must be a sense of credibility and some joint ownership.

A couple of the adult interviewees mentioned that it is difficult for youth to be trusted because professionals working in organizations don't even trust each other inside their bureaucracies. The interviewees said this bigger issue of trusting people's competence and integrity in the larger society needs to be tackled. All interviewees agreed that communities should be key players in all collaborations. To reach full potential it is necessary to include schools, government and community groups. Generally, those interviewed felt that intersectoral work is necessary to reach a long term solution.

2.3 Conclusions on the Scan Process

The scan was successful in helping to identify possible participants for the Think Tank. Of the thirty-four people who attended the Think Tank eighteen had direct links to the scan:

- Six participants were Advisory Team members who had been involved in carrying out the scan.
- Five participants had been interviewed as part of the scan (five others who were interviewed were invited, but were not able to attend).
- Seven participants had been recommended from people who were interviewed.

The scan provided background information for the Think Tank. As section 2.2 above indicates there was some major learning from this process. The background documents were circulated to all participants in advance and were considered useful in setting parameters for discussion. Two participants mentioned that they could have been used more directly to start Think Tank discussions. The Advisory Team found the information extremely useful in designing the Think Tank agenda.

The scan also helped to build some momentum leading up to the Think Tank. A number of people who had been involved in the scan began to establish rapport with others who would be attending the Think Tank. All participants had the opportunity to read the Backgrounders and get an idea of the themes that might come up for discussion. The scan definitely helped establish ownership for the whole process within the Advisory Team.

The Think-Tank agenda began with a welcoming address by Kathy Coffin, Acting Executive Director of Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Atlantic Region.

How can we effectively address the needs of young people? This Think-Tank is to:

- *Explore opportunities for collaborative action among sectors addressing youth health issues.

- *Develop a working relationship with young people (13-24) to feed into and inform policies and program development.

- *Identify a range of mechanisms for involving youth in decision making.

- *Your advice on how to work collaboratively with youth and youth serving organizations on the design and development of programs and initiatives.

- *Your policy ideas and direction on the work to ensure the work meets the priorities of youth; your recommendation will help us shape our future work!

3.0 Getting Started: Why a Think Tank on Youth Health and Empowerment?

The Think Tank was held at the Mount Saint Vincent University Mother House from June 12 - 14, 1998. Thirty-four people participated, seventeen youth and seventeen adults. This group was representative of many types of people including, Caucasian, Aboriginal, African Nova Scotian, Immigrant, English speaking and Francophone. Government, service and voluntary groups were represented, and people from health, environment, recreation, justice and employment sectors (Appendix 6). Great effort went into helping this group of people understand the parameters of why we had been brought together. People became familiar with each other and began to discuss the goals of the Think Tank. The investment of time and energy in all these start-up activities was useful in letting participants know that "getting to know each other" and learning to work together in an enjoyable way was an important beginning to the Think-Tank. This section reports on those early activities of getting started.

3.1 Purpose, Objectives and Expected Outcomes

Objectives and outcomes for the Think-Tank were based on HPPB's needs, the Team's ideas and the information gathered from the background scan. At the opening session participants expressed their endorsement to go forward within these parameters.

Purpose of the Think Tank:

To advise Health Canada HPPB Atlantic on working collaboratively with youth and youth serving organizations from the four Atlantic provinces on the determinants of health.

- To expand HPPB Atlantic's partnerships for addressing youth health issues.

Specific Objectives:

- share experiences and ideas on youth empowerment and health understanding
- explore opportunities and identify possible initiatives that would involve collaboration amongst all relevant sectors in addressing youth issues
- advise Health Promotions and Programs Branch, Atlantic Region on how to develop a working relationship with youth on policy and program development within the determinants of health
- identify a range of mechanisms for involving youth in decision making and identify the health determinants impacted by the work of various organizations
- enjoy our time together and develop a sense of the possibilities for collective, cooperative action with youth

Expected Outcomes:

- Strategies for HPPB Atlantic to partner with youth and youth serving organizations, & with other levels of government, who work with youth to address the determinants of health.

- Advice on how to work collaboratively with youth on the design and development of programs and initiatives of HPPB Atlantic.
- An informal Atlantic network of youth and people working in youth oriented organizations.

**Comments from
Participants' Needs
Assessments**

*My greatest hope is to get youth more involved in decision making.

*My greatest fear is there will be no follow-up.

*I hope to gain more insight on youth empowerment.

*I hope to share ways of working WITH youth (not to or for them).

3.2

Participants' Needs Assessment: Hopes and Fears

A needs assessment was conducted to engage participants in the planning process. Each person was sent a questionnaire entitled "Hopes and Fears" which asked them to share their needs and hopes for the Think-Tank. At the opening session of the Think-Tank, the Advisory Team summarized some of the general hopes and fears expressed by participants in the needs assessments. Sharing this information was helpful in setting a sense of focus and building a cooperative rapport among the participants.

3.3

Getting to Know Each Other

A significant amount of energy, and a number of different activities were designed to help participants get to know each other. These activities were extremely important in setting a tone for the workshops, building trust and a sense of equity between participants and establishing the rapport that was so important later on in workshop discussions.

3.4

Process - Norms and Standards for Working Together

An exercise was used to establish the norms and standards for how the group would work together. Small groups brain-stormed what "the ropes" should be. This was very useful and everyone contributed. It also helped participants to recognize that the process of working together was just as important as the outcomes.

Some major determinants of health for young people in Atlantic Canada as identified by Think Tank participants include:

- *self-esteem
- *Involvements, friendships and social support networks
- *coping skills
- *drugs and alcohol
- *family life
- *choices about self identity
- *racism
- *pressures of school and home life
- *support of parents and peers
- *environmental air quality
- *gender discrimination

4.0

Sinking Our Teeth Into The Issues: Understanding Youth Health

During the Think-Tank, much time was spent exploring youth health issues. More specifically, energy was focused on discussing youth health programs and initiatives, how people can impact the determinants of health, and forming some concrete suggestions that could help to alleviate some of the problems youth encounter each day.

4.1

Understanding Youth Health in Context

As a method to jump into concrete discussions about "understanding youth health in context" at Friday night's opening session scenarios were developed for analysis. The scenarios, written by the Youth Advisory Team, were used to invoke discussion around youth, empowerment, and the determinants that affect young people's health. From the individual scenarios participants identified major issues that influence the health of young people in Atlantic Canada.

John's story, for example, raised the importance of understanding family life and self esteem. This and many of the other stories identified the strength and value of involvement, friendships, and social support networks.

Erin's story got people talking about moral supports and the benefits of learning coping skills for surviving and thriving as a young person today. Some participants commented that drugs and alcohol and the lack of time parents might have for supporting their children could be attributed to the difficulties young people experience.

Gerald's story got us talking about upbringing and support systems. We examined the difficult choices youth face in establishing their own identities by the way they look or the way they dress - and the way others (sometimes violently) - react to these choices. This led to discussions of racism and the potential of young people becoming the victims of cults.

Wanda's story got us talking about responsibilities and the pressures of school and home life - and the support that is needed from both parents and peers in dealing with these pressures.

Jill's story was somewhat different and raised issues around environmental air quality, and the continued existence of gender discrimination and the often overwhelming worries young people have about the future. These worries are not only economically related, but may have other more direct environmental causes that need to be dealt with.

4.2 Suggestions on Programs / Initiatives / Directions To Promote the Health of Young People in Atlantic Canada

Provide Options

- It is essential to have a variety of different programs and opportunities available. Youth like something that will spark their interest. Youth are not a homogeneous group, and no activity or initiative is going to meet the needs of all youth. A variety of strategies are necessary for involving and working with youth in which youth have some involvement in setting the direction and the priorities of what is needed at that particular time.

Support Individuals Who Can Make a Difference

- Support mentors, and alternative workers for youth. It is important for youth to have positive role models, who treat individual youth with respect and as people with potential to make positive contributions. These programs and initiatives need to be planned for the long term stability and sustainability are very important.
- Promote peer counseling. Youth working with other youth, perhaps those who have "recently been through similar struggles" is an effective strategy to make a positive difference.
- Organize stress management / time management and leadership symposiums for all youth. There is a continuum of risk for all young people. It is necessary to work with both the involved and the uninvolved youth and to develop coping skills to strike a balance in their lives. However, while it is important to encourage all youth to get involved, it is equally important to recognize when some youth are suffering from the stress of over-involvement. Everyone has the potential to excel or to crash hard because of overwhelming involvements.
- Friends are particularly important to youth. Telling youth to drop friends who may be their only support network is inappropriate, yet at the same time there can be "hate or cult groups" that can have a negative influence on youth. Sometimes parents may be right in telling young people not to get involved in these groups. However, how parents communicate this message is challenging. Cooperative "parenting of teens" programs (facilitated by parents and teens, in which participants learn better communication skills) are needed for both parents and their children.

Work with Schools

- Working within the school system is essential. This is the place where young people spend most of their time. Health workers and other government departments need to find the opportunities to work in collaboration with schools.
- Schools need to recognize that the environment contributes much more than just the "approved curriculum." Important options are provided by outside organizations and institutions. There needs to be collaboration between school, family and extracurricular and outside activities.
- More school - parent committees are needed whereby both groups see their joint responsibilities.

Support Families

- Support families and youth together, not as isolated entities. Families are very important to young people. Positive adult - youth communication needs to be promoted and help

given to develop programs around "how to parent teens." These sessions could be co-facilitated by teens and adults together.

Help to Overcome Financial Barriers

- More bursaries and grants must become available for education - at secondary and post secondary levels. Just the cost to take a night course is prohibitive to many. Government, Private Business and Educational Institutions need to make a joint effort to help overcome financial barriers to education
- Free child care - and day care in high schools for students' children is essential. Many teens have added responsibilities taking care of younger siblings. A better universal child care program would change this.
- Establish a higher minimum wage, both for teens attempting to survive on their own and for families that support themselves through minimum wage jobs. These changes would not only support economic needs of families, but build self esteem of all members and create the space in people's lives to forget certain worries and concentrate on other issues.

Value Difference and Diversity and Work to Eliminate Prejudice and Racism

- Promote communities' celebrating cultural diversity. At the same time don't deny the existence of racism, hate crimes, cults and systems of power and privilege. Just celebrating diversity will never be enough. Initiatives need to be put in place to help young people and adults in this society see the difference. For some zero tolerance policies are the only acceptable strategy for change.
- Respect people's expressions of their own individuality. At the same time individuals need to understand the current society's norms and must accept some responsibility for the choices they make and how others may respond to them. It is easy to fall into the trap of blaming the victim. If a group responds in an extreme way to the expression of someone else's individuality, they should be held accountable. Yet, it is also necessary for youth to be aware of the risks of nonconformity in a society that is still intolerant.
- Promoting anger management initiatives and conflict resolution strategies can be one of the ways to begin dealing with these issues.

Help Deal in Both Short and Long Term with Problems in the Physical Environment

- Recognize that there are specific problems in our physical environment. Supports are needed that provide alternatives for immediate needs for individuals who are chemically sensitive or environmentally ill for example. This can be done in part by realizing that many of these individual needs are collective needs. By working together we might be able to do something about them. This is a societal problem. It is necessary to deal with environmental factors that are influencing us negatively. A coordinating body such as an environmental ombudsperson would be useful. This could be modeled on the rental ombudsperson in New Brunswick who settles disputes between renters and tenants.

4.3 Impacting the Determinants of Health: Approaches, Initiatives and Organizational Issues

Saturday morning's session at the Think Tank took off where Friday night's had ended. Participants were asked to go back into their home groups to elaborate on the discussions

the night before concerning determinants of health and impacting those determinants. Discussions in small groups generated some valuable information. More valuable, however, were critical points that were shared in a "talk show panel" format facilitated by one of the story team, and individual reflection sheets that were submitted by participants. This session captures those collective comments and suggestions.

Based on participants' input about what determines the health of young people and what ~~perhaps~~ to impact those determinants three areas deserve attention: the approach to be taken; the types of initiatives or directions that are most needed and the organizational issues dealt with.

Approaches to Impacting the Determinants of Health

Increasing Community Responsibility

One of the approaches to impact the determinants of health for young people is to recognize the responsibility of the entire community for dealing with the factors that influence people's well-being. Initiatives need to be interconnected and overlapping. In this regard Health Action aims to encourage and support community-based initiatives and networking with many organizations to achieve health.

Improving Children and Meeting Basic Needs

One of the goals is to be a paradigm shift around valuing children and young people and the role they can make to building a healthy society. Participants agreed that early childhood education should be emphasized. Programs that help meet basic needs (i.e. nutrition, food, shelter and clothing) are also needed.

Understanding Health

The approach must see people as assets to the community and part of the solution not as the victims of illnesses to be cured. No person is unhealthy or healthy. They may be or have illnesses that are not well or are suffering, however, there are always a multitude of positive and negative elements that contribute to determining a person's well being.

Issues of Initiatives and Directions that are Needed

Increasing Positive Images of Youth

One initiative that could make a big difference is promoting a variety of positive images of youth in popular culture and the media. These images should be representative and will need to ~~understand~~ ~~understand~~ some of the negative stereotypical images of youth constantly portrayed in the media.

Increasing Positive Social Supports

There was an overwhelming agreement that social support networks and the social environment are the major factors that determine the health - both positively and negatively - of young people. Strengthening positive support networks should then be a priority. It is important to weaken the ability of negative networks like hate groups or cults from influencing young people. Young people need positive role models in their lives and social networks that keep people healthy and empower them.

Increasing Programs for Self Esteem, Mentoring and Leadership

Self-esteem, Mentoring and Leadership are important issues that need to be given much more

"Community, community!
That means all of us. Don't
pass the buck to others."

"The entire society has some
responsibility for the health
well-being of its members."

"When we get into
administration or government
and become burdened by
economic constraints, we
neglect the focus on social
sustenance supports in the
community...these supports
make a world of difference
for the people that need it."

"We need resources to run
of these wonderful ideas.
It's great to brainstorm ideas
and programs, but let's face it
without funding these ideas
will never be implemented."

"Self-esteem is basically
the key to being healthy and
happy."

attention in initiatives with youth. Building self esteem is critical or indirectly. Mentoring, peer counseling, and leadership programs have proven their value many times over. All of these can be from outdoor adventure programs to involvement in teen centers. Teens are given the opportunities to set up the guidelines for the

whether it is done directly or empowering youth in a variety of ways. It is often successful when programs themselves.

Encouraging Access to a Variety of Services and Opportunities

It was also emphasized that different youth are interested in different types of programs. Therefore, a variety of opportunities and services are available. Sports, for example, is not the cure-all solution to youth problems. More programs enhancing "passive recreation" need to be developed frequently as physical recreation components.

to take part in different programs need to be made available for all youth. It should be implemented as

"We need to look at long term solutions, build networks and avoid band-aid solutions."

"Access and opportunities are the main points of having total well-being."

Organizational Issues

Ensuring Consistency

Participants emphasized that there is a real need for consistency and sustainability with programs and initiatives. Start with early childhood education, and continue education consistently through school. Everyone was concerned about services provided for youth and how these services sustainable.

low-through, and good and parenting into young adulthood. dollars available to make

Securing Resources

Funding is essential for all groups. Our governments must recognize the community. The government must remain a key leader in the programs. The community is capable, but without dollars no progress needed is "investment in youth." This could include things like mentoring, co-op programs, and free post secondary education. Advocate in helping people and communities secure the resources.

to the needs of the young and support of youth can happen. The initiative by childhood education, maybe HPPB could be an key need.

Developing Linkages - Collaborating Intersectorally

School systems, parents and communities must work together. To be successful initiatives need to come from youth and involve all of these larger partnerships.

from partnerships. For these youth within the framework

4.4 Conclusions and Recommendations on Youth Health

The following recommendations grew out of the scenario and collective discussions related to understanding youth health. Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Atlantic and potential health.

the field analysis and the recommendations are for partners for work on youth

Individuals, youth groups and organizations need to:

- Help to ensure that other government officials recognize the importance of youth health.

importance of education for

- Help to ensure that other government officials recognize how free child care and a higher minimum wage could support the health of youth.
- Encourage and support community-based initiatives and networking with other departments and organizations to achieve health
- Consider involvement in a regional media initiative to promote a positive image of youth
- Encourage all government sectors to respond to the needs of the community and support youth programs
- Form links and collaborate with school systems, parents and communities to support initiatives that come from youth.

5.0 Sinking Our Teeth Into It: Discussing Mechanisms for Empowering Participation

Think Tank participants invested lots of energy in the discussion of mechanisms for empowering participation. There were significant small group discussions that people reported on, extensive large group discussions focused around particular questions, and then (on Sunday morning) intense discussions leading to recommendations for HPPB.

5.1 Actions and Mechanisms for Empowering Participation

The series of discussions around participation began with guided discussions in small groups. A worksheet was provided to guide their process. A synopsis of the comments and suggestions around these questions follows.

Organizational and Institutional Actions

What can we do in our organizations and institutions to support the involvement and empowerment of youth?

- **Communication** The first step is to ask youth to get involved. Forming a youth or teen advisory group is essential. Develop focus groups of youth, or mixed groups of youth and adults to consult with. Ensure these focus groups have some accountability back to other adults or young people in the community. In order to encourage communication, adults should go to where youth are, and where youth feel comfortable in the community. Be willing to adapt dress codes to make youth feel accepted (youth friendly). Don't just get a token youth involved -- that isn't 'good enough'. Get youth recruiting other youth. Hire youth who volunteer, and provide incentives that are desired by youth.
- **Clear Process** It is important to establish standards and policies for how you are going to work together. A part of this is using words and language that everyone understands. There needs to be some structure, but it should also be informal. Participants need the opportunity to both learn and teach skills as part of the process. It should be a priority to act on valuable youth suggestions, not just to talk about them. People involved should value the time spent with youth and to genuinely listen to what youth have to say. There should always be the opportunity for youth to evaluate the entire process.
- **Provide Practical Needs** Provide photocopying, basic supplies and places for youth to meet. There are minimum requirements for any youth organization. These should be seen as a good investment. Support sustainable programs.
- **Collaboration / Cooperation** People in organizations and institutions need to work together in a spirit of cooperation. They need to be clear about how partnerships get established and must accept that equality around the table rarely exists. Sharing knowledge around the table is valuable, yet participants must also recognize that some power imbalances will exist. Groups can get in trouble if they talk about power too much and use all their energy to eliminate power. People should work to create something that is real (even if there are still some power imbalances) rather than

fool themselves with an illusion of something that is really not true. It would be more useful to develop strategies to redress power imbalances. People must recognize that the transition from client to shared power is a huge and fragile step. There is a difference between *being* equal and *treated* equal.

- **Network.** It is essential to encourage others to play a role. Parents and families should get involved in youth organizations and institutions. The government - at municipal, provincial and federal levels - needs to be encouraged to play a big role. Everyone must see youth as a good investment.

Principles, Attitudes and Values

- What principles, attitudes and values do we need to keep in mind to be supportive of the involvement and empowerment of youth?

- **Mutual Respect** All individuals need to be treated with respect. Ideas that people bring forward to a discussion should have equal consideration whether they come from adults or youth. Both adults and youth stated that this is not always the case. Adults need to inform youth that youth have a say and adults do want to hear from them. Adults need to see youth as resources and less as objects and/or recipients of programs. On the other hand, youth need to remind adults that adults have a say and that they shouldn't have to "feel bad about being older." Youth commented that often they get the feeling that adults do not actively engage and share their ideas because they think it is not their role to do so. Youth and adults both need to recognize that youth can learn something from the experience of adults. Youth also need the opportunity to contribute and to be recognized as members of the community. They are tired of hearing about "youth being problematic."

- **Faith and Trust** People need to have faith and believe in youth's capabilities and in their potential. People need to trust that everybody has the ability to decide what is right for them.

- **Openness and Honesty** Open mindedness is important. Both adults and youth should not make quick judgements. They have to be honest about their assumptions and what they understand and do not understand. A tension free atmosphere needs to be promoted to make interactions more youth friendly.

- **Acceptance of Responsibilities** Parents have the most influence on their children. Many youth and adults commented that some parents do act this way and "blame" the media or the school system. Parents need to accept their responsibility and work diligently to help to break down the communication barriers that often exist. A significant element of this is recognizing that adults and youth grew up (are growing up) in very different worlds. Communication between generations and accepting that both groups can learn from each other is essential. Parents need to give more responsibilities to youth, but at the same time to accept the responsibility to teach, support and help youth get the resources needed for taking on these responsibilities. Youth need to accept there is a give and take in responsibilities. Both youth and adults have to realize that we all have something to contribute and that everyone has to act on the things they say they will act on. It is important to be both consistent and reliable.

- **Recognition of Complexities** Youth and people working with youth need to define what youth involvement is and agree to a uniform frame of reference. This is important because

At no time will adults be
nsupervised!"

there is a whole continuum of how professionals see youth -- either as objects, or recipients' or as resources. Seeing youth as 'objects' can be very problematic, as this view's youth as 'empty vessels' who need to be filled up with knowledge and skills. In the worst case scenario youth can be seen as objects that can be exploited. Seeing youth as 'recipients' would put adults in the position of leading and controlling youth initiatives. In this approach there could be movement towards some responsibility for youth, but youth would only be valued to a limited degree. Seeing youth as 'resources' is a move toward power sharing, and recognizing different perspectives and skills. Adults and professionals will have to value and recognize youth for the experience and expertise that they bring.

Structures and Methods

- What structures and methods are most supportive for the participation and empowerment of youth? (For this question participants were asked to think about large scale organizations such as a provincial youth council. Some straightforward recommendations resulted.)
 - Define the goals for the organization.
 - Create a structure that is concrete and clear.
 - Enable youth to make their own decisions and ask them what they want to gain and what they expect the organization to achieve.
 - Don't support "fixer models," or initiatives "for" youth or "at" youth. These are approaches that treat youth as "problems that need to be fixed," or "objects" that other people act upon. They are disrespectful of youth as human beings and active subjects in identifying and dealing with their own issues. Models that prescribe an ideal way of working tend to be inflexible and take away from the possibility of empowerment.
 - Promote pro-activity instead of reactivity (prevention rather than curative).
 - Recognize the world is difficult for the youth of today.
 - Help to ensure that child advocates in place for each province/region.

Practical Ideas for Involving Those Who Do Not Normally Get Involved

- What are some of the initial steps that need to be taken to get youth who do not normally get involved to take the first step "through the door" and become active?
 - *Communication with Youth* Ask the youth this question, "What are some of the initial steps that need to be taken to get youth, who do not normally get involved, 'through the door' and become active?" Beginning with a broad open-ended question like this is valuable. Go to the youth. Invite each individual personally by word of mouth to get involved. Be patient. Listen to youth and be available, on a regular basis, for sharing ideas and experiences. Youth need to feel important.
 - *Basic Personal Needs* Be sure that youth have proper housing, nutrition and transport in order to participate.
 - *Staffing* Have staff from diverse backgrounds. Have youth recruit other youth. Provide the opportunity for youth to talk with others who can relate and share their experiences. In providing these opportunities, avoid the potential for labeling youth as "problems."
 - *Different Options* Offer a variety of youth directed activities and ensure there is convenient access to these activities. Have an "open door" policy for whoever comes in, and universal programs that are available to everyone. Ensure there is a good social setting so youth can have fun. Youth need a safe place with a relaxing atmosphere.

- **Positive Messages** Make youth fully aware that they are needed and that they have a strong voice. Prove by actions that youth are needed, wanted and valuable. Demonstrate a genuine interest through body language, the way questions are asked, and the way conversations are engaged in.
- **Policies and Targets for the Long Term** Accept it is a challenge to get those considered "at risk" involved. Start by getting those who have dealt successfully with past personal issues and are willing to share their "story" and experience with others. They can be the best link to get others involved. At the same time don't categorize and cut off those who are presently at risk. They may need some kind of support now so they can potentially get involved in the future.
- **Skill Development** Enable youth to learn skills and render services. Skill development should be ongoing not just for new members of a group. Everyone involved should continuously have the opportunity to learn to do things in different ways.

5.2 Key Questions for Further Discussion in Plenary

The small groups were asked to further the analysis by posing critical questions to the larger group in plenary. The following is a synopsis of those plenary discussions.

(A) Considering that it is a social norm that adults have control, power over, or are responsible for youth; how can youth and adults have an equal or power sharing relationship? Where is the give and take in responsibility?

This question raised a thought-provoking discussion about understanding power and empowerment. There was agreement that power has a number of different meanings: 1. decision making, 2. responsibilities, 3. protection, 4. control, 5. leadership. A distinction was made between the power to protect and the power to rule. Someone suggested that power can be used to help people (great leaders) and that sometimes there does need to be some kind of power structure (i.e. the power to protect). One person suggested it's how you use the power that makes it bad, not the power itself. For leadership that is empowering (not dominating) participants referred to the important ability to "move away from controlling a situation," and "always treating people as equals."

It was also discussed that people have to recognize that certain power is held by the ones who are making decisions and everyone has to be honest and admit that we are not equal in our abilities to affect what will happen. That is a myth. The reality is there are imbalances of power. People can tackle tasks together, and treat each other with mutual respect and honest, open communication; people can treat each other equally. It is important, however, not to "get hung up" on power issues and expect that we will be equal. People need to ensure that those who have the power for making decisions are responsible and accountable for those decisions. One group spoke about "balancing the triangle of respect, communication and equality" as a necessary practice for both youth and adults working together.

(B) How do we build trust relationships?

There was unanimous agreement that building trust was very important for youth and adults to work together. Some of the simple suggestions for building trust were to listen and

talk with respect, to take action, be consistent and promote sustainability. Avoid the "flavour of the month" approach. A number of participants commented that adults (and government departments particularly) "don't stick to their programs," and it is because of this that youth don't trust them. The process of working together is also very important and if both parties trust the process then there can be trust between the parties. The suggestion was also made that there are lots of practical trust building activities from outdoor education and other areas that could be used in adult and youth forums.

In trust building trial and error can be useful. Getting people together and "doing things" can be a great learning experience and trust can evolve through doing activities together. It is not the particular activity that is so important. Participants commented that it is a danger to get so concerned about building trust and being successful in future activities that we don't actually do very much. The analogy was used of spending a lot of time "getting ready, aiming, aiming, aiming and never firing." The recommendation was made that people working in organizations have to trust the process to "get ready, fire and readjust the aim later." A lot can be learned from that shared experience.

(C) If we are promoting empowerment and youth participation how do we achieve a balance between rights and responsibilities?

"It takes a community to raise a child" A proverb quoted by a Think Tank participant

This question generated a very valuable discussion around balancing work to reinforce youth rights, with an emphasis on youth responsibilities. This balance must be struck in the context of family and community. Participants said that schools and service providers need to reinforce these ideas as well. One group shared their discussion that it is quite "North American" that we spend so much time talking about rights, but very little about responsibilities. The examples were given that in First Nations and many other cultures around the world responsibilities in the extended family are considered very important - such as a role model for younger siblings. The example was given that many cultures believe a collaborative effort is needed to educate a child. Here in North America, however, it appears that people are afraid to discipline or say anything to a neighbor's child even if it is known that he or she is doing something they are not supposed to be doing.

The group was left with the question, "is it necessary to buy into this philosophy? Should everything we do, be reflective of the dominant culture? The facilitators of this discussion added other things to think about:

- How can we work respectfully with children as assets and underutilized resources?
- How can we create community?
- How can we change the accepted responsibilities of parents and children so there is a better balance with their rights?
- How do we ensure both adults and youth consider the consequences of action or inaction?

This discussion of rights and responsibilities was very important to the Think Tank overall.

(D) How do we find common ground between the generations to enable better communication between them. Any ideas? What are other ways of reaching youth?

Participants suggested that what is needed is that both sides (youth and adults) must be willing to listen. It is also important to work with both youth and adults who value each other. Examples are needed that demonstrate how adults and youth can work together and

that show how valuable youth can be. It may also be necessary to remind adults "to ask youth" in order to understand what youth issues are.

The suggestion was added that it is necessary to start asking children at a young age what they think so they become used to giving their opinions - and hearing the opinions of others. Participation must begin at an early age. One participant suggested that we should not assume youth don't want adults around. That is not always true, what youth don't want "is to be used by adults in an abusive way." Adults were told not to apologize for being adults - they have strengths and experience to share - but at the same time they have to realize that things are different for youth today. What is important is to recognize that youth have strengths and experience to share.

(E) What is an effective process to develop programs with mentors when there is little money available? What is the best way to get volunteers?

Youth were clear that they recognize and value volunteer mentors. However, everyone agreed it is difficult to find volunteers who can make a consistent commitment. All individuals need to earn a living, and those being asked to be mentors are being asked to take on a difficult role with no financial reward. Mentors need to be nurtured along and supported. It is challenging to find new volunteers and many participants felt some community members are over committed and over worked. The question: how to empower others to become mentors? What are the alternatives?

5.3 Recommendation Concerning Youth Involvement and Empowerment

A highly productive time was spent on the Sunday morning of the Think Tank working in small groups to come up with some specific recommendations for HPPB. There was not time to discuss these issues and the subsequent recommendations in depth, but there was general agreement that these were positive directions HPPB should move toward. All participants look forward to the action HPPB and others will be taking on some of these recommendations in the near future. All of the following recommendations were presented by the small groups.

5.3.1 TO HELP TO FIND COMMON GROUND AND BREAK DOWN THE GENERATION GAP

HPPB and Think-Tank Participants need to:

- Talk with other federal/provincial government departments about the YEAHU Think Tank and how it was done.
- Develop a common understanding of culture, race, and ethnicity. Race and culture can be very different things. Racial diversity, for example, should be a goal of all activities for example and should be named as such. At Think-Tanks such as this there needs to be cultural and ethnic diversity and racial diversity.

HPPB, Individuals/Groups/Organizations concerned with youth health issues need to:

- Set up a youth reference group;
- Invite other departments to engage in a youth empowerment process by coming to the table to discuss youth issues so they will find common ground and be able to move together
- Establish opportunities for youth networking within the Atlantic Region
- Develop a youth group directory (of both youth serving and youth driven organizations). This would include names, addresses, contact persons and mandates.
- Develop a media campaign (radio, TV, newspaper) that would help to change the general public perception of youth. The campaign would need to promote positive things, value youth, and get communities involved.

5.3.2 TO PROMOTE SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES FOR YOUTH

HPPB, Individuals/Groups/Organizations concerned with youth health issues need to:

- Make sure that they prioritize recommendations and initiatives according to what youth need the most.
- Involve youth in priority setting for youth programming including youth review of project proposals.
- Make sure youth are part of all partnerships and ensure research and project proposals have youth involvement.
- Promote being conscious of youth friendly: language, meeting times and schedules.
- Support annual youth symposiums,
- Support surveys concerning public perception about youth,
- Support a quarterly newsletter that shares positive contributions youth are making
- Support Think-Tanks on specific issues as they come up in the Atlantic Provinces such as on job finding and employment as these are also major issues for youth.
- Include a wider range of organizations in discussions on youth issues and stop spending so much time talking to the converted.
- Establish youth mentoring networks.

5.3.3 TO PROVIDE ONGOING SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT

HPPB, Individuals/Groups/Organizations concerned with youth health issues need to:

- Support youth driven organizations through skill development, i.e. on how to obtain resources (mentors, funding).
- Stress: the importance that organizations understand the necessity to support youth before and after projects
- Support organizations that make long term commitments to youth Promote youth mentor for adults who want to work with youth
- Support youth enterprises, that youth control, and help to generate and develop initiatives relevant to these enterprises so that youth gain experience and can eventually compete for contracts. Youth need to be the providers not just recipients.

TIP: An Affirmation Activity that Worked
 Thank everyone for their work and to encourage ongoing collaboration in the future all participants were asked to tape a piece of flip chart paper on their back. Everyone was then asked to go around and write messages to others on the paper. It was a chaotic mass of people with flying paper and markers, but everyone really enjoyed naming the contributions they thought others had made. They also appreciated the opportunity to thank people for their energy and spirit. Everyone took these flip chart papers home with them as a memory of the Think Tank and as some positive encouragement for themselves and their ongoing work.

5.3.4 TO GET OUT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND HEALTH UNDERSTANDING

HPPB, Individuals/Groups/Organizations concerned with youth health issues need to:

- Use media to expose examples of positive youth impact and youth issues from youth perspectives. Use Advertising: Buttons, Logo's and other physical promotion, to reinforce a positive image.
- Have a National Youth WEEK, this would make youth more visible and it would heighten awareness of youth issues.
- Promote youth getting more involved in their community, e.g. in service projects. Tap into existing groups, particularly youth-driven projects to get youth involved in different committees. Build on youth projects going on now in schools that could take place beyond schools.
- Support Youth Achievement Awards (YTV)

5.3.5 TO DEVELOP POLICIES REGARDING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

HPPB, Individuals/Groups/Organizations concerned with youth health issues need to:

- Begin a process with youth to develop realistic policy statements.
- Establish a Task Force made up of 50% Youth, 25% HPPB and 25% Community People. This Task Force needs to model the principles they decide are important. These principles should cover issues such as: cooperation and communication, honesty and openness, accepting responsibilities, sensitivity to cultural differences, respecting diversity of youth, and sharing power and control. The Task Force needs to start with a blank sheet. There should be support for a reference group for each youth participant and administrative support to non-government members. The Task Force and HPPB need to be aware and familiar with the principles from YEAHU, and should establish youth friendly norms. HPPB needs to start this work immediately! Have realistic policies articulated and a description of activities they can realistically do. Ensure that a true diversity of youth is represented including youth with disabilities. Having youth involved will positively draw in more youth.

6.0 Validating the Process: Evaluation of the Think Tank and YEAHU

The final session of the Think Tank was used to capture affirmations, commitments and learning from participants, and to evaluate the Think Tank and the overall YEAHU initiative.

Affirmations were considered important to validate the work and the networking that all participants did. Participants wrote notes to each other on flip chart paper. All participants were given a large picture of all the participants (photograph was taken the day before). Advisory Team members were presented with certificates thanking them for their work. All of these activities were useful in affirming the work that people had been done.

An unwritten objective of the workshop was for individuals to commit to do something different in the future in regards to their own work involving youth. To try and capture some of people's thoughts and reflections about this, everyone was asked to take 10 minutes and write a letter to themselves. No one saw this letter except the person themselves - they were sealed in an envelope and will be mailed to the participants three months after the Think Tank. This letter will serve to remind each individual of particular commitments, new insights or reminders of networking responsibilities related to the Think Tank experience.

6.1 Participants' Learning

The Think-Tank process that was used was participant-oriented and focused on everyone learning. Naming the learning of the participants was therefore considered very important. Here are some examples of what people said they learned.

- *New Knowledge* Participants said they learned about the many organizations working on youth issues in the region, and they learned about other people and their lives. This is important for a Think Tank which was trying to promote networking.
- *New Attitudes* Participants commented that they gained hope, inspiration and an increased sensitivity to people and issues as a result of the Think Tank. These are important attitude shifts.
- *New Skills* Participants said they learned evaluation tools, energizers and activities to use in facilitating think tanks. A number of people said they learned skills in working together and working with diverse opinions.

6.2 Participant Evaluations

At three points during the Think-Tank participants were asked to formally evaluate how things were going. These activities were built in to ensure that objectives were being met, and to get a feeling for the tone of the group. They also provided an opportunity for all participants to have some input and feel part of the Think-Tank. As follow-up to the Friday night and Saturday afternoon evaluations a sampling of evaluative comments was shared with all participants on Saturday morning and Sunday morning respectively. These evaluation feedback sessions were important in validating that the facilitators took the evaluation comments seriously. They also helped in building that attitude of openness and honesty that

was helpful throughout the Think-Tank. The comments themselves were helpful in the last-minute design adjustments that were made as the Think-Tank progressed.

Sunday's evaluation was cumulative of the entire Think-Tank process. Participants were asked to give any comments on the lead up to the Think-Tank as well. Overall, participants seemed very pleased with the think-tank. They liked the energy and commitment, the variety of activities, the openness and the exchange of ideas. They commented on the strength of leadership showed by the young people. When asked what they liked least about the sessions, many people commented that there was too little time and that sometimes the group was not focused. Some participants were concerned that 'hot topics' were not explored and that sharing was discouraged in some instances. Most felt that the Think-Tank objectives were met. On a personal level most people felt that their own hopes were fulfilled and that some good networking took place. Overwhelmingly the most valuable opportunity was meeting and networking with others, and learning that so many people are actually trying to do something to support youth. Some recommendations were given about including people representing other groups, and some advice was given to organizers for improving an event like this in the future. Other comments from participants were very positive and gave congratulations to the organizers. All in all, the evaluation helped validate that the whole process was a worthwhile venture.

6.3 Organizers' Reflections

Overall, Advisory Team Members felt that the entire process went well. Many mentioned that they would enjoy working together again. During a conference call on June 23, 1998 the entire process was discussed and the following is what was mentioned by Team Members.

POSITIVE REMARKS

- Team members appreciated having meeting agendas in advance, this kept the meeting productive.
- The advisory team and all the groups were open, honest, and democratic.
- Participants were able to 'give in' sometimes, to compromise, and to reach a consensus.
- Everyone took turns chairing meetings.
- The team took lots of time to plan the event.
- The scan helped to reiterate and solidify ideas concerning the Think-Tank.
- The advisory team and the entire Think-Tank group came from diverse backgrounds (Province, age, culture, races, religions).
- Team members had confidence in each other, and in themselves.

THINGS TO DO DIFFERENTLY

- Need to better represent Blacks and other visible minorities, disabled community and the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual community on the team and in the Think Tank
- Need to keep with our set time limits
- More time for the Think-Tank

WHAT WOULD WE DO THE SAME DIFFERENT / NEXT TIME?

- could do much the same, the process was good
- was a great opportunity to feel empowered as youth
- invest time to build a trust relationship, we were confident in everyone's abilities

- the Mount Saint Vincent Motherhouse was an ideal location - it was a great environment and conducive for people getting to know each other
- the food was great, and the fact people ate together was important
- "Everything was good, the Moons were aligned"
- Diversity made a positive difference in the facilitation
- the event was casual, people felt relaxed
- the evaluations are very important they helped participants to feel open, honest and to take ownership
- More HPPB representatives and others should be present at the Think-Tanks rather than just relying on reports

Team members emphasized that if you are going to have a think-tank on youth health issues, you need to involve youth. This involvement cannot be at a superficial level. It is not sufficient to just invite youth to attend, but they need to be involved in the decision making. The YEAHU process was able to do this. Youth were respected and considered partners in the development of all aspects of the initiative. Other services, projects, and initiatives work if those you are trying to help are involved in the process - the planning and the decision making. It was also mentioned that if youth are going to be seriously considered as a resource then they should be paid for their services. This is why it is key to have honorariums or a salary for youth. This also shows that you value their sacrifice of time, energy and study time.

At *YEAHU: A Think-Tank on Youth Health Issues*, it was noted that the diversity of the participants helped to make the experience more fulfilling and meaningful. Participants had an opportunity to hear the perspectives of many. Regrettably, some groups were under represented. This was in part due to some unavoidable last minute cancellations. The advisory team suggests that in order to ensure equal representation, organizers must aggressively recruit people from diverse backgrounds.

It may be useful to 'over represent' groups who have traditionally been left out in the decision making. This approach helps to promote diversity and to avoid tokenism. A helpful technique is inviting individuals from these groups in pairs. This way they can feel reassured that there will be at least one other participant in attendance with a similar background. This was the policy taken by the organizing committee in making invitations to potential participants, but it in itself is not fool proof. In attempting to involve a diverse group of people, it is important to set up some type of policy or system that can be followed throughout the invitation process. During the planning of YEAHU, the Advisory Committee set up a policy/system to make this possible. This "quota system" was based on census data and helped the organizers to represent people at the Think-Tank according to demographic proportions. This system was not ideal, but it was a way that the Committee could ensure the representation from a cross-section of people (young, old, male, female etc. . . .). It may take a lot of effort, but it is well worth it. Though our invitation process was not ideal, we can attribute much of the success of this Think-Tank to the diversity of its participants.

Conclusion: Putting it all Together - Key Learning from YEAHU and Directions for HPPB

In conclusion it is imperative to recognize that when taking on youth initiatives, agencies and organizations have traditionally involved youth at a very superficial level or not at all. As a result, the energy gone into these programs and projects have not reached their full potential and/or have not addressed the real need. To effectively address youth health issues, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of youth empowerment. To administer to youth, youth must be involved. To ensure success of youth programs, youth must be involved in decision making. This is particularly true when dealing with the complex web of factors that determine the health of youth. As youth needs change, the objectives and approaches to address youth health issues must change as well.

Healthy youth are confident. They feel empowered and in control of their lives. When taking on initiatives that address youth health the key is to find out why many youth feel powerless, unsure and out of control. To do this it is important to confer with youth themselves. Ask young people about the struggles they face each day, ask them for their perspectives to their problems and invest time, resources and commitment into enabling change to meet their needs.

At YEAHU: A Think-Tank on Youth Health Issues, youth and adults worked together to explore with the best ways to address youth health and identify effective mechanisms for empowerment. This type of partnership between youth and adults was found to be both effective and necessary. The following are some key points that participants came up with:

- Youth need to be involved. They like to be asked for their opinion and need to be encouraged to say what they are truly thinking. It is not good enough to just invite youth; tokenism will not work.
- Youth will be involved if they are a part of the planning and decision making.
- Youth want adults to be committed to their work with youth. They need ongoing programs and concrete solutions. People must do what they say they will do.
- Money is not the only resource that is needed. Mentoring, professional support, and volunteering are very effective and appreciated by youth.
- Communication is essential. There needs to be mutual respect, understanding and trust to bridge the generation gap. Adults need to acknowledge youth involvement and realize that youth are growing up in a different world than they did.
- There needs to be a balance between rights and responsibilities for youth and adults. Both sides need to be willing to listen.
- Parenting is not just for parents, "It takes a community to raise a child."

There were some major outcomes of the Think-Tank.

Think-Tank participants also came up with many strategies on how to partner with youth serving organizations. The primary conclusion was that in order to better serve youth, youth need to be involved at all levels and should be a key player in the decision making. Health Promotion and Programs Branch need to focus their action around groups

that have already involved youth as decision makers and use those organizations as models for engaging other communities seeking to empower youth.

Think-Tank participants came up with a much clearer understanding of youth health issues, factors that determine health and ways to impact these determinants. Based on this understanding, the following advice can be given to Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Atlantic as the future direction they, and others, need to take in their work with youth:

Collaborate and Motivate

- Help to ensure that other government officials recognize the importance of education for health.
- Help to ensure that other government officials recognize how free child care and a higher minimum wage could support the health of youth.
- Encourage and support community-based initiatives and networking with other departments and organizations to achieve health
- Consider involvement in a regional media initiative to promote a positive image of youth
- Talk with other federal/provincial government departments about the YEAHU Think Tank and how it was done.
- Include a wider range of organizations in discussions and stop spending so much time talking to the converted.
- Promote youth getting more involved in their community such as in service projects. Tap into existing groups, particularly youth-driven projects to get youth involved in different committees. Build on youth projects going on now in schools that could take place beyond schools.

Educate

- Be clear when talking about culture, race, and ethnicity. Race and culture can be very different things. At Think-Tanks such as this there should be cultural and ethnic diversity.
- Promote being conscious of youth friendly: language, meeting times and schedules.
- Support youth driven organizations by teaching skills on how to obtain resources (mentors, funding).
- Stress the importance that organizations understand the necessity to support youth before and after projects
- Keep in mind that we also need youth mentors for adults
- Help people develop skills to work with other youth.
- Be sure that a true diversity of youth are represented including youth with disabilities. Having youth involved will positively draw in more youth.
- Make sure that HPPB and other groups and organizations concerned with youth health issues prioritize recommendations and initiatives according to what youth say is needed.
- Make sure youth are part of all partnerships and ensure research and project proposals have youth involvement.

Facilitate

- Support annual youth symposiums, surveys concerning public perception about youth, a quarterly newsletter that shares positive contributions youth are making and Think-Tanks on specific issues as they come up in the Atlantic Provinces such as on job finding and employment as these are also major issues for youth.
- Use media to expose examples of positive youth impact and youth issues from youth perspectives. Use Advertising: Buttons, Logo's and other physical promotion, to

reinforce a positive image.

- Have a National Youth WEEK, this would make youth more visible and it would heighten awareness of youth issues.
- Support Youth Achievement Awards (YTV)
- Establish youth mentoring networks.
- Support youth Enterprises, so youth will control, generate and develop initiatives so that eventually youth can compete for contracts. Youth need to be the providers not just recipients.
- Develop a media campaign (radio, TV, newspaper) that would help to change the general public perception of youth. The campaign would need to promote positive things, value youth, and get communities involved.

In order to work collaboratively with youth on the design and development of programs and initiatives, HPPB first needs to consider youth as equal partners in the process of better addressing youth(13-24) health issues. Also, it has been recommended that Health Promotion form a reference committee made up of a diverse group of youth from the Atlantic. This group should be diverse in age (13-24), geography, race, culture, creed, religion, gender, sexual orientation and levels of physical and mental ability. This group of youth should be very eager, have dealt with youth groups and/or youth health issues and should be compensated for their efforts.

An initial step for Health Promotion and Programs Branch, Atlantic would be to establish a Youth Reference Group or Task Force. This Task force would be made up of 50% Youth, 25% HPPB and 25% Community People. This Task Force needs to model the principles they are working on. These policies should cover issues such as: cooperation and communication, honesty and openness, accepting responsibilities, sensitivity to cultural differences, respecting diversity of youth, and sharing power and control. The Task Force needs to start with a blank sheet. There should be support for a reference group for each youth participant and administrative support to non-government members. The Task Force should be aware and familiar with the principles from YEAHU, and establish youth friendly norms. HPPB and their partners need to start this work immediately! There needs to be realistic policies articulated and a description of things they can do. HPPB needs to forge links and establish formal networks with communities in the Atlantic Region.

The YEAHU planning, research and Think Tank consultation was valuable. The ultimate success of the entire YEAHU process depends on the follow-up that comes next. As one participant stressed:

"Community, Community! That means all of us!"



Appendix 1

Advisory Team Criteria

To develop this youth committee, key people from across the Atlantic Provinces who are known for their work with youth-serving and/or youth-empowering organizations were contacted for suggestions of candidates. A letter was sent to each of these key contacts. The letter outlined the purpose of the Think-Tank and a criteria that would guide who the key contacts would suggest. This criteria included:

Criteria

- youth (male or female) between the ages of 15 and 21 (approximately)
- either in school or out of school
- experienced working with youth-driven or youth service organizations at the decision making level
- good communication skills
- able to critically evaluate processes and approaches that may or may not work with other youth
- openness to sharing experiences and learning from other youth from the Atlantic Region

Commitments

- able to participate in approximately five one hour conference calls over the next three months to discuss the development of the project and the Think Tank
- read and be prepared to comment on documents circulated in advance of conference calls
- attend and participate in the two day Think Tank on youth health issues. This Think Tank will take place in Halifax in late May or early June 1998
- potentially be available to identify and interview youth in their area concerning ways in which youth can be involved in projects impacting the determinants of health
- able to comment on a draft of the final report of the Think Tank in a conference call before the report is submitted to Health Promotion and Programs Branch

Remuneration

- an honorarium of \$25.00 will be paid following each conference call
- all conference call, and other communication expenses will be covered
- travel, accommodation and meal costs will be covered for the Think Tank
- an honorarium will be paid for participation in the Think Tank
- if a decision is made for the advisory committee members to assist with interviewing other youth an additional honorarium will be paid for this



Appendix 2

YEAHU - Youth Empowerment and Health Understanding

Youth Advisory Committee

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	FAX or E-MAIL
Jake Faraday	119 Fergusons Cove Rd. Halifax, Nova Scotia B3V 1G3	902-477-7777	(902)479-4635
Annick Magrath	Casse Postale 5264 Caraquet, New Brunswick E1W 1B7	506-764-3597(h) 506-727-6122 506-727-7043 (sch)	(506)727-7030 (sch)
Lori Walsh	General Delivery Cartwright, Labrador Newfoundland A0K 1B0	709-938-7539	709-938-7030
Reggie Sylliboy	Mr. Reggie Sylliboy 29 Beacon Hill Cres. Eskasoni, Nova Scotia B0A 1J0	902-379-2549	902-379-2586
Aaron Koleszar	rr#2 Belle River, Prince Edward Island C0A 1B0	902-659-2570	aaronk@isn.net
Fiona Heald	47 Bristol St. St. John's, Newfoundland A1A 2E5	709-685-6025	709-579-3526 creatix@roadrunner.nf. net
Kelly Thomas	2155 Monastery Lane apt#427 Halifax, Nova Scotia B3L 4P9	902-425-4951 902-429-5576	902-423-7214 kethomas@is2.dal.ca
Shany Albert	164 rue Louis de Lanteigne Caraquet, N.B. E1W 1A9	506-727-6409	506-727-7030
Chris MacKinnon	Mr. Chris MacKinnon rr#1 Grand Tracadie Prince Edward Island C0A 1P0	902-672-3683	



Appendix 3

Quota System for Selecting Participants

n Preparation For Our Second Conference Call

Please think about who (both youth and adults) you think should be invited to the Think-Tank. We can only invite about 25 people in total and I know there are going to be lots of really good people out there.

We propose:

1. We brainstorm names of people we know.
2. We agree on some criteria for "the type of people" to invite.
3. We agree on a loose quota system to (a) ensure we get some kind of representation of the area (b) some reflection of the rich diversity of the area.
4. We put 1 to 4 together and come up with a list of the first 25 people to invite and a second list of substitutes in case the first set of people are not available.

-
1. Do you know of any people (youth or adults) that would be a real asset to the Think-Tank on youth health and empowerment?

Name: Adult/Youth Contact Number: Key Experience to Offer:

2. What do you think the criteria should be for who we invite to the Think-Tank?

Examples:

.....involved in youth groups?

.....involved in making decisions with youth-driven groups?

.....previous experience?

3. What changes need to be made to this quota system? It is roughly based on the population of the Atlantic Region, while trying not to be "token" by only inviting one representative of a minority group, but trying to ensure the voices of those minority groups are heard.

Tentative Quota System Assuming 20 Participants:

20=10 youth (age 15 - 20) and 10 adults

20=7 Nova Scotia, 7 New Brunswick, 4 P.E.I., 4 Nfld. & Labrador

20= 14 English and 6 French

20= 3 First Nation, 3 Immigrant, 3 African Nova Scotian and 11

20= 17 able-bodied and 3 physically challenged

20= 17 straight and 3 gay

20= 10 male and 10 female

20= 8 low income and 12 "average income

20= 9 high school, 5 university/college, 3 working, 3 not working



Appendix 4

Scan of Youth and Youth-serving Organizations

Nova Scotia

#	Interviewer/*Details	Organization	Address
1	Ms. Joyce Ross *Adult from youth serving organization	East Preston Daycare Center	1799 Highway #7 East Preston, Nova Scotia B2Z 1E9
2	Ms. Jenny Smith * Youth from youth-driven organization	The Red Door (Former Participant)	
3	Sharon Amirault *Adult from youth-serving organization	Boys and Girls Clubs of Nova Scotia	P.O. Box 188 3045 Robie Street Halifax, Nova Scotia
4	Darren Cossar *Youth from youth-serving organization	Dartmouth North Boys and Girls Club	P.O. Box 361 Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B2Y 3Y5
5	Carol Pickings-Anthony *Adult from youth-serving organization	Parks, Recreation & Culture Kentville Skateboarders Park	P.O. Box 99 Bridgewater, Nova Scotia B4V 2W8
6	Rick Gilbert *Adult from youth-serving organization	Nova Scotia Youth Secretariat	P.O. Box 1617 Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2Y3
7	Marge Debodt *Adult from youth-serving organization	Valley Youth Alternatives	P.O. Box 621 Kentville, Nova Scotia B4N 3X7
8	Deborah Moriah *Youth from youth-driven organization	Teen Health Center Research Initiative (Halifax North)	6696 Chebucto Road Halifax, Nova Scotia B3L 1M1
9	Shannon Lynch *Youth from youth-driven organization	Youth for Social Justice, Halifax	c/o Oxfam Canada 2099 Gottingen Street Halifax, Nova Scotia
10	Jean Robinson-Dexter *Adult from youth-serving organization	Recreation Association of Nova Scotia	

11	Melissa Labrador *Youth from youth-serving organization	Provincial Youth Council	RR#1 South Brookfield Queens County, Nova Scotia B0T 1X0
2	Riley Stewart *Youth from youth-serving organization	Scouts Canada 1 st Jollimore Scout Troop	
3	Ruth Danson *Adult from youth-serving organization	Holly Drive Elementary School	2 Marie Avenue, Halifax, N.S.
4	Donald Chaddock *Youth from youth-serving organization	Scouts Canada 1 st Jollimore Venturers Company	
15	Christine Metallic *Adult from youth-serving organization	Eskasoni First Nation Health Worker	25 Shore Road Eskasoni Cape Breton, Nova Scotia B0A 1J0
6	Mylene Dipenta *Youth from youth-driven organization	Environmentalism and Youth Activist	

Prince Edward Island

1	Jennifer Burgess *Adult from youth-serving organization	Chances	16 Brighton Road Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island C1A 1T4
2	Kathy Flannigan-Rochon *Adult from youth-serving organization	Early Childhood Services	P.O. Box 2000 Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island C1A 7N8
3	Chris MacKinnon *Youth from youth-driven organization	Youth for Social Justice, Charlottetown	RR#1 Grand Tracadie Prince Edward Island C0A 1P0
4	John Vallentin *Youth from youth-serving organization	Adventure Group, P.E.I.	P.O. Box 98 Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island C1A 7K4
5	Janice Broderick *Youth from youth-driven organization	Canadian Federation of Students	35 Victory Avenue Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island C1A 5E9

6	Laura Hagen *Youth from youth-serving organization	Premier's Forum on Youth	Cornwall RR#4 Prince Edward Island C0A 1H0
7	Kathy Constable-Hodson *Adult from youth-driven organization	Inner City Youth Connection	50 Cumberland Street Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island C1A 8Y8
8	Katimavik Representative *Youth from youth-serving organization	Katimavik	
9	Sharon Cameron *Adult from youth-serving organization	Department of Education	P.O. Box 2002 Charlottetown, P.E.I. C1A 7N8
10	Laraine Pool *Adult from youth-serving organization	Child and Youth Services Dept of Health and Social Services	4 Sydney Street P.O. Box 2000 Charlottetown, P.E.I. C1A 7N8

New Brunswick

1	Dr. Mary Scott *Adult from youth-serving organization	Public Health and Management Services N.B. Dept. of Health and Community Services	P.O. Box 5100 Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 5G8
2	Monica Chamberlain *Adult from youth-serving organization	Executive Director St. John Community Health Center	116 Coburg Street Saint John, New Brunswick B2L 3K1
3	Alain Basque *Adult from youth-serving organization	Youth Futures Program Human Resources and Development, N.B.	P.O. Box 6000 Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 5H1
4	Allie McIntyre *Adult from youth-serving organization	Principal Fredericton High School	300 Priestman Street Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 6J8
5	Mark Lacey *Adult from youth-serving organization	Partners for Youth Adventure Programs	575 George Street Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 1K2
6	Reni Han *Adult consultant to youth-serving organization	Han Martin Associates	P.O. Box 354, Station A Fredericton, NB E3B 4Z9

7	Beverly Barnes *Adult from youth-driven organization	Executive Director New Brunswick Youth Council	P.O. Box 6000 Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1
8	Martine Blanchard *Youth from youth-driven organization	New Brunswick Youth Council/Conseil des Jeunes Francophones de Nouveau Brunswick	
9	Jennifer DeJong *Youth from youth-serving organization	Kids Against Drunk Driving (K.A.D.D.)	174 Rocky Road Mouse of Keswick, New Brunswick E0H 1N0
10	David Parise *Adult from youth-serving organization	Polyvalente Louis-Mailloux	Case postale 5751 30, rue Cormier Caraquet, Nouveau Brunswick E1W 1B7
11	Miigam'agan *Adult mentor to youth organizations	Burnt Church	
12	Barbara Martin *Adult consultant to youth-driven organizations	Han Martin Associates	P.O. Box 354, Station A Fredericton, NB E3B 4Z9
13	Sylvie Albert *Youth from youth-serving organization	Polyvalente Louis-Mailloux	Case postale 5751 30, rue Cormier Caraquet, Nouveau Brunswick E1W 1B7
14	Zepheniah Otuki *Youth from youth-serving organization	Multicultural Association of Fredericton	

Newfoundland and Labrador

1	Joan Casey *Adult from youth-serving organization	Department of Education	P.O. Box 8700 3 rd Floor, West Block Confederation Building St. John's, Newfoundland A1B 4S6
2	Tim Turner *Adult from youth-serving organization	Brother T. I. Murphy Center, St. John's	
3	Lillian Simms *Adult from youth-serving organization	Child Welfare and Community Corrections	

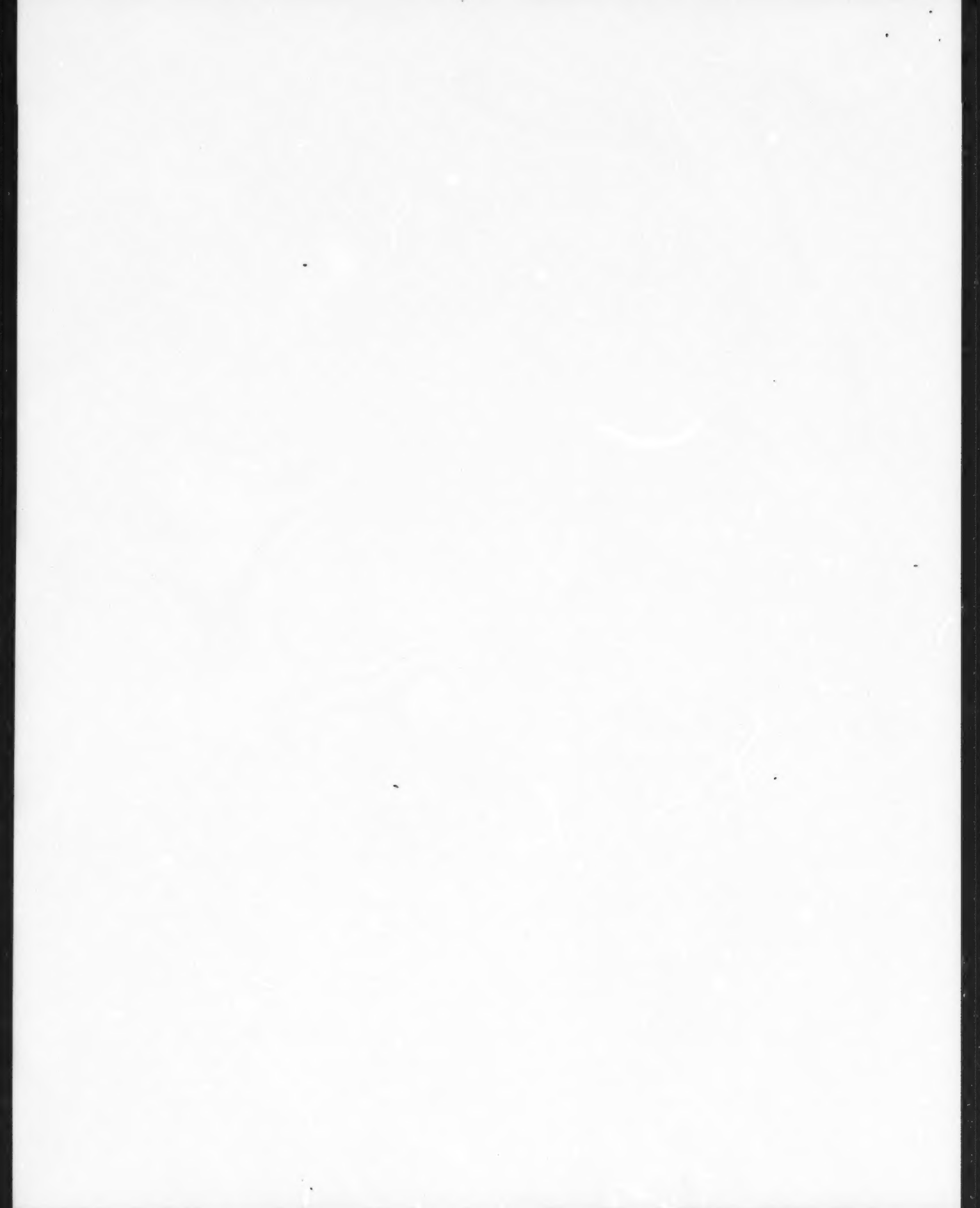
4	Trisha Kinsey *Adult from youth-serving organization	Eagle River Outreach Project	P.O. Box 130 Cartwright, Labrador A0K 1V0
5	Ellen Chalker *Adult from youth-serving organization	Allied Youth Program	
6	Neil Tilley *Adult from youth-serving organization	FINALY - Futures in Newfoundland and Labrador's Youth	
7	Ethel Heald *Adult from youth-serving organization	Department of Health and Community Services	P.O. Box 8700 1 st Floor, West Block Confederation Building St. John's, Newfoundland A1B 4S6
8	Moyra Buchan *Adult from youth-serving organization	Canadian Mental Health Association, Newfoundland and Labrador Division	P.O. Box 5788 St. John's, Newfoundland A1C 5X3
9	Andrew Forward *Youth from youth-driven organization	FINALY - Futures in Newfoundland and Labrador's Youth	
10	Chris Corbett *Youth from youth-driven organization	SHOUT - Students Helping Others Unite Together	
11	Emily Woolfrey * Youth from youth-serving organization	Allied Youth	New World Island, Newfoundland
12	Karen Walters *Youth from youth-serving organization	Junior Achievement, Girl Guides of Canada	23 Glenhaven Blvd. Corner Brook, Newfoundland A2H 4P7
13	Andrea Party *Youth from youth-driven organization	FINALY - Futures in Newfoundland and Labrador's Youth	

* designation as youth-serving or youth-driven organization given by interviewers; often organizations at different places on continuum of youth-serving to youth-driven for different programs that are offered



Appendix 5

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS



How can we effectively work intersectorally to address the needs of youth?



Our survey says:

The Think Tank Advisory / Planning Committee did fifty-three interviews with youth and people working with youth about this question. Here are some of their comments. Quotes are on the left in *italics*. Other common statements are paraphrased in the text on the right.

We have to reach the point where we do not ask ourselves should we work intersectorally; rather we must recognize, it is the only way that our work is going to make a difference!

I feel we can only benefit from links between groups. It adds strength, enhances education, and shares resources and expertise where one group may not be equipped.

Don't forget that youth are one of the sectors we need to work with.

Imagine what could happen if we had adults and youth working together to accomplish their goals.

Don't be afraid to give challenging assignments to young people, but make sure that you give yourself enough time to work WITH them.

We are only putting our toes in the water working with youth, we need to understand why they feel alienation, why they are angry, why they drop out and must do that in a way that can establish mutual respect . . . we have a fair distance to go yet.

Intersectoral Work

Working intersectorally to address the needs of youth is essential. A big part of this is changing attitudes and traditional ways that we work - whether it is in government, community groups or the private sector. It is necessary to recognize the skills and abilities of people in different sectors and realize that what a group of people can do together no one could do alone. It is important to consider the contributions youth make to all parts of society.

Working with the Youth Sector

Government and community organizations need to take the risk of sharing decision making power with youth and must get behind their ideas and action. Youth don't feel government listens to them. Don't use youth as tokens or take information and then refuse to work on it. That will destroy any possibility of working together.

Youth appreciate the advice, experience and inspiration they get from people in other sectors - but it must be seen as a two way street. Too many adults don't seem to have any patience for youth.

There are differences between youth. This "sector" is broad and diverse on its own.

Working within Government

Separate silos do still exist - they are barriers to true partnership.

How do you challenge the usual way of doing things in a way that does not create conflict, but net growth?

Maybe the challenges haven't been that great because of the way I've chosen to work co-operatively. Maybe the links I've chosen to make have made work go forward in the way that I needed it to go forward and not be stalled. I can think of some organizations or groups that I would not - at this point in time - go out and make the link with, simply because - from what I can perceive - their ways of thinking and working would put up too many roadblocks. So I choose from the whole deck of cards [of possible partners]; I pick the hand that is going to make this happen the most productively and efficiently in the time I have at my disposal.

It's cost effective to hold events in the school building. Youth don't have to pay a big registration fee to be involved so nobody is excluded for lack of money. You're over a barrel if the school doesn't cooperate - and you can't say anything because then you won't be able to book another school because you'll be seen as bad mouthing another one.

We must be VERY careful of the kinds of relationships built with the private sector. In the case of business, the main goal is to make dollars - this can be in direct or indirect conflict with organizations oriented toward your health.

We got \$60,000 worth of free space over the last 4 1/2 years.

It is a real challenge in government to work intersectorally or interdepartmentally. Departments have their own mandates, and traditional ways of doing things. Giving up turf is difficult, it is time consuming and people are not generally rewarded for doing it. Unfortunately, intersectoral work is just considered an add on. The challenge is to break the silos of departments - to cut across horizontally. For this to happen each department needs to be recognized for what it contributes. There must be a sense of credibility and some joint ownership.

It is essential when working collaboratively to not only consider your own needs, but enable others' needs to come to the table. Similarly it is essential to recognize that others might be better skilled in certain things than we are and we need to build on that. It is easier to go from department to department to work on specific things rather than trying to get a group of departments together.

The real challenge is if an individual's career is on the line she or he is reluctant to take chances and do things differently. Many people in government are terrified others will breach confidentiality and tell what goes on in the government policy making process. There is a mortal fear of this. When youth (or people from other departments) get involved with government process they must have respect for guidelines and the personal integrity to "play the game up to a certain point". Departmental accountability is the crux of the matter.

There is a trust issue. Youth are not trusted because we don't even trust each other inside our bureaucracies. Would it make anybody feel better if they understood this?

It is essential to work with schools and municipal governments - such as recreation departments. Don't just think of the public sector as Federal and Provincial departments.

Working with the Private Sector

Local business should get involved. By simple things like donating prizes they help give credibility to what is going on and make youth think it is a serious event. They can provide funding. In some cases their values and approach may be similar to what a joint initiative is trying to achieve. At the same time there is a danger - they have their own priorities.

Working with the Community

Career professionals must get out in the community and work with others - bring their assets, abilities, strengths and their limitations.

Get people to understand the concept of integration. It's important to do your own thing well, but you also need to recognize that there are other things which need to be done - and other people do them well, so you need to work together.

There is a great time commitment to intersectoral work.

It is a wonderful idea to focus on partnerships and collaboration. To reach full potential we have to include schools, government and community groups. Sometimes all that is needed to make it work is a leap of faith. Recognize the specific skills of partners. Get the community movers and shakers involved. If you don't ask them they won't be in the loop - and can't support you, or change the way they've done things in the past. Referring clients to other community services is in itself a form of collaboration. There are many youth serving organizations that are eager to help with the plight of youth.

It is also more complicated than that. Government can't keep giving things back to the community who didn't ask for them - especially when they expect the community to take on tons of responsibility, but don't get any authority or resources. We have to recognize the common-unity of community.

There are teens in crisis. Yet we must work to reach a long term solution, not just get caught up in day to day issues. Balance is important. Working intersectorally, you learn from each other - different approaches, fresh ideas - and it can be therapeutic to know that other groups are with you in the struggle to meet the needs of youth.

Things to think about:

- What else can we do to make our intersectoral work more effective?
- What barriers or obstacles stand in our way?
- How can we overcome these obstacles?
- How can HPPB help?

Principles for Involving and Empowering Youth

- Listen
- Value what is said
- Respect
- Enable initiatives to be directed and run by youth
- Recognize the independence and uniqueness of each young person
- Focus on strengths - work on those before issues build on their capacities - build on assets of the community
- Recognize change is slow and is a constantly evolving process
- Work with youth as opposed to "for" or "to" them
- Develop collective consciousness that youth are important
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What can you add to this list?

"LISTEN with a big heart. Listen with a sense of integrity - don't pay lip-service. Understand that you are listening to people with different experiences and you need to recognize them."

"Young people are sick of being told what they can't do - they want to hear what they can do. Focus on their assets."

Listen, and act on what is said. Five years later students have the same concerns.

Respect youth's ideas and abilities. LISTEN to them.

Making Meetings more Youth Friendly

- Provide lots of information before hand
- Set time in agenda to look at things if necessary
- Don't have meetings during office hours when youth are in school
- Ask youth in advance to be a speaker or give a presentation at a meeting and then leave if bored
- Don't ask youth to join a committee where language or abbreviations are used
- Stay connected between meetings
- Have meetings at appropriate locations (accessible for youth)
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What can you add to this list?

"Don't use big words that people pretend to understand so they don't look stupid"

"I don't like suits. We had a retreat that was casual dress, and EVERYONE was more comfortable and the discussions worked better."

"I see it as a responsibility on my part if I've involved this young person, that I make sure that the process includes whatever is needed for her full participation"

"Get youth at meetings so other adults can recognize the benefits - but don't set youth up if there is really no interest."

"There is a role for some guidance and unobtrusive control from people youth respect. Don't ask us to make all the decisions, but to feel part of the process."

What are the most effective mechanisms for involving and empowering youth ?



Our survey says:

It works because youth run the show it is up to them what how why and when they want to do things.

Where youth are the reason for the clubs, they HAVE TO involve youth in the decision making process.

Youth positions are often tokenized - youth don't have any real power.

The youth have a vote but the vote doesn't really have any clout because there are so many adult votes. The environment the mood and the atmosphere combine to make the students uncomfortable. It takes a strong student to speak up. The situation should be welcoming to any students contribution.

Respect!

Youth as a whole have to learn that they can do anything when they get together and put their minds to it.

Adults as a whole need to learn that just because youth are younger and have fewer experiences that that doesn't mean they don't have something valid to add to the topic at hand.

The Think Tank Advisory / Planning Committee did fifty-three interviews with youth and people working with youth about this question. Here are some of their comments. Quotes are on the left in *italics*. Other common statements are paraphrased in the text on the right.

Respect

Youth have skills to deal with their own issues. Respect them for that. They will be accountable.

Not Tokenism

Don't just rely on a handpicked "youth representative". If you really want a youth perspective, you have to be open to all youth. Two out of a board of 18 is unacceptable. Have youth on the executive. Have a minimum of 50% of youth at a forum. People might not be used to it, but in the end people will see the value.

Positive Efforts to Involve — and Empower — a Variety of Youth

Find out where youth are coming from and build a rapport with them. Get them to believe there ARE opportunities; that there are adults who respect them and will listen to them, that they CAN develop their ideas and drive their own initiatives. Be accepting of youth instead of judging them. Program flexibility is essential to helping the people who need it most. Be careful about only working with elitist youth, or youth from an advantaged social class. Work with a cross section of youth from diverse backgrounds - include at risk or apathetic youth. Provide lots of different opportunities for

The mindset, "we've been in the world longer. We're educated and we can think better. Let us make the decisions", doesn't help.

We get a lot more respect from other youth because they relate to us

Peer programs are the best.

Its got to seem valuable

There is not one approach, must provide multiple ways of getting involved and getting connected.

Success? It was a case of youth saying what they wanted and building on that.

If we approach youth as a client or a consumer there will never be ownership - we'll just build dependency - we need to use mutual education, mutual support, and mutual aid. A peer model is the only thing that works and has sustainability.

It is stupid to have some adults get up and talk about youth leadership; it MUST be youth.

To have adults do presentations is just like school, which is what youth don't want

Inviting youth into the process is a start, but also be prepared that the process will have to change

Recognize that anyone needs to be motivated to go to a focus group. Go into classrooms where you get a captive audience. If you do a good and entertaining job it can lead to getting youth involved in other things. Youth going into classrooms to speak with other youth is the best way to this.

Sometimes youth can be difficult with each other - they reflect the way our society is as a whole - trying to get involved in schools student council or other others own the meetings and it is difficult for newcomers to be heard - need opportunities for leadership and conflict resolution skills.

Youth's Terms for Involvement

Youth don't want to be tied down that's why drop-in centres work. You can get youth in the door if it is a non-obstructive, non-obtrusive, unstructured environment. They can go talk with friends where no one listening over their shoulder. The place can give sense of belonging and control. Many youth will tune out from structured programs after a while. Must be flexible to support what is trendy and hot.

Find strengths and resources of teens and build on that. Not excluding - but enabling youth to take some responsibility and position in the community can make a big difference. Getting input and letting youth create something and giving some positive acknowledgment in the community is important.

Youth Control

Let go and enable youth to have control of their own process. The structure must allow teens to "do their own stuff". Teens should have their own sub-committees to bridge to any larger process where both adults and youth are involved. Then these teens must have access to where decisions are being made and must be involved in these decisions. By having committees of teens the participants will know other teens are behind them. It is their accountability.

Committees from a Large Geographic Area

We've tried the student council model, but it didn't work because it set up divisions between the young people - people who were involved and people who weren't - and youth were uncomfortable with that.

Meeting four times per year as an advisory committee is maybe not enough. Need some time to bond and build some momentum. Organizationally it is a lot of work, but the quality of the selection process is critical - particularly around commitment. It might be difficult and time consuming, but will be very productive.

Advice to Adult Supporters / Resource People

Guides on the sides

Adult resource people can keep the wolves at bay, they can help to push back the edges; this space is necessary - youth are perfectly able if adults just back the heck off they will prove it to you.

Form a relationship. Then if you mutually recognize a need for something you can help give a focus and some responsibility.

A lot of adults think they know better and maybe they do but they don't even try to listen to what I believe or how I feel.

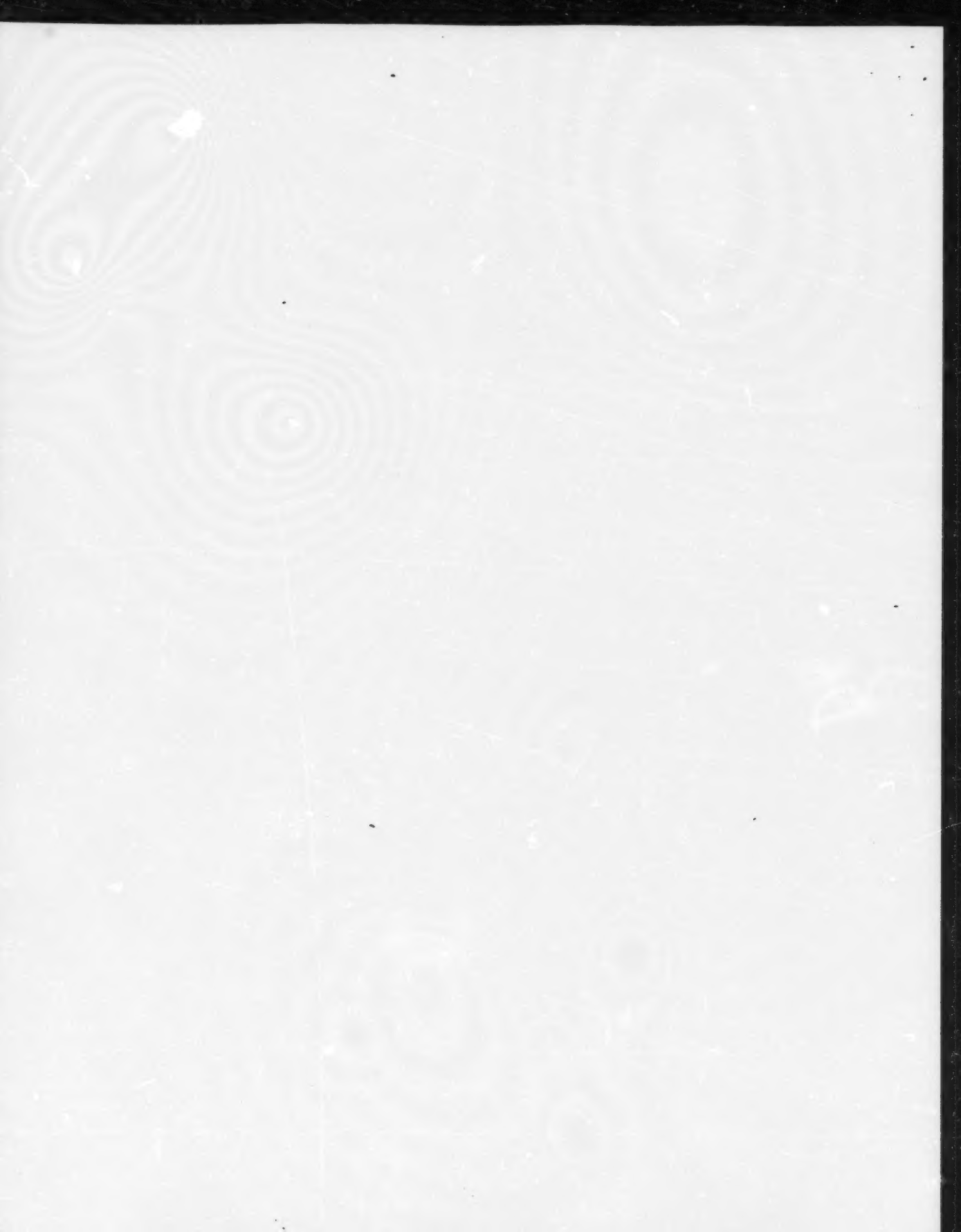
It is difficult for the helping professions to let go. We are ready to be the heros, the rescuers, the Zoros. It is a valid role, but can't be done ongoing and will build dependency.

The community development approach is slow and mad and chaotic. It needs time and effort from everyone - We can't look for overnight success.

- Believe in abilities of young people
- Have a little magic in motivating young people - it takes a real knack to make people feel welcome and invited, yet that is the most important thing
- Be someone youth can trust, friendship and mentoring can only happen after trust is built
- Don't do it for them, but follow-up and do what asked to do and agreed to do
- Share skills, contacts, experience, listen and advise.

Things to think about:

- What other mechanisms are you aware of that are helpful for involving and empowering youth?
- What are the barriers and obstacles for putting these mechanisms in place?
- How do we overcome these barriers and obstacles?
- How could FPPB help?



What determines the health and well-being of young people?



The Think Tank Advisory / Planning Committee did fifty-three interviews with youth and people working with youth about this question. Here are some of their comments. Quotes are on the left in *italics*. Other common statements are paraphrased in the text on the right.

Education, employment and social support networks are important, but you can't really consider determinants in isolation from each other, they are interconnected.

Everything

The health and well-being of young people is determined by a web of factors. These factors are intricately interwoven. A youth in one community will be affected by a certain group of factors that might be very different for another youth in another community.

Environment (where we live), our opportunities (how we live), our education (how much we know) all determine our health.

Social Support Network

In all cases, however, support and encouragement from family, friends and the community is very important.

Peer groups help develop healthy lifestyles and offer a support network when there are problems.

Peers

There is a need to fit in. There is all kinds of pressure to be popular. Youth must feel part of something, and to have a sense of belonging, self worth and self esteem. Involvement in a peer group is really important, "that's the way youth learn". The strong peer pressure to be part of something can be positive or negative. For some young people they feel painfully different. They do not feel comfortable with themselves and feel pressure to do things cool and fashionable.

Peer education has the greatest positive impact on Youth talking with other youth because they listen to each other.

Family

The role of family, parents or a significant other person as a support is also crucial. Youth need to be supported to develop their personal strength. This builds the individual and should start with caring, sharing. Youth also need to build personal relationships. Relationships are key to enabling youth to access services, to go after information and to advocate.

Everything there is to know from our parents from things like how to scrunch up your face when you concentrate to interacting with people.

Family environment you are brought up in - values, what you were encouraged to eat, recreation, do in school etc. What does your family think of health?

Community

Youth want to feel a part of their community. For that to happen youth must be treated in an equal and respectful manner. For some

I was shy. I did not want to do anything, then I was asked to help out. It built my self esteem, so now I go out and look for things to get involved in.

others there is a sense of hopelessness. Youth must have the opportunity to make choices about the direction of their life. For some concerns are more immediate, such as how to get by day to day - yet the bigger issues are still there.

A real challenge is to develop resiliency in young people. Our society has this attitude that there are those at risk and those who are not. All youth will feel some anger, or confusion or frustration or depression at times. They need to know that is OK and there is someone who will support them no matter what.

Coping Skills

It is OK to feel what you are feeling. It is OK to feel anger. It is OK to feel depressed sometimes - Others are feeling that too.

Your decisions (about eating, exercising, smoking, drinking etc) make your life - making these decisions are coping skills.

Teenagers are going through many things for the first time. Being able to survive these things, and having the skills to handle stress is important. Leadership, communication and conflict resolution skills are valuable. It is also necessary to learn independent living skills.

Income

Everything is connected to income in some way - whether it is general physical health, lack of opportunities, or strain on social supports. If you can't afford to go to school or can't afford transportation it is going to effect your health. However we need to remember that people living in poverty still maintain values and integrity and youth growing up in situations of poverty can still develop the needed resiliency.

Employment

We can not forget the economic context of this region - it has a major effect on young people and their families. For 15-24 year olds at risk the best thing is to give them a job. This is a lifeline. It helps them develop income, self esteem, life skills and some sense of security.

Education

Education - both formal and informal - must be strong and meaningful. It should combine ability, interest and the labor market. There is a responsibility to get information to youth so they can make informed choices, whether it is about work or personal health practices. Education must be timely and relevant and must form a link to employability.

Culture

Youth need to address the conflicts between the values we are taught at home and those that are promoted by the media.

Media, music, videos, magazines all have a strong influence on the health of young people. How we are supposed to look and to act, what we are supposed to do, the fast life we are supposed to live modeled on actors or sports stars; all these things strongly influence our health. Our society can be very competitive which is very confusing and disturbing for youth. Culture and race is also a factor.

Physical Environment

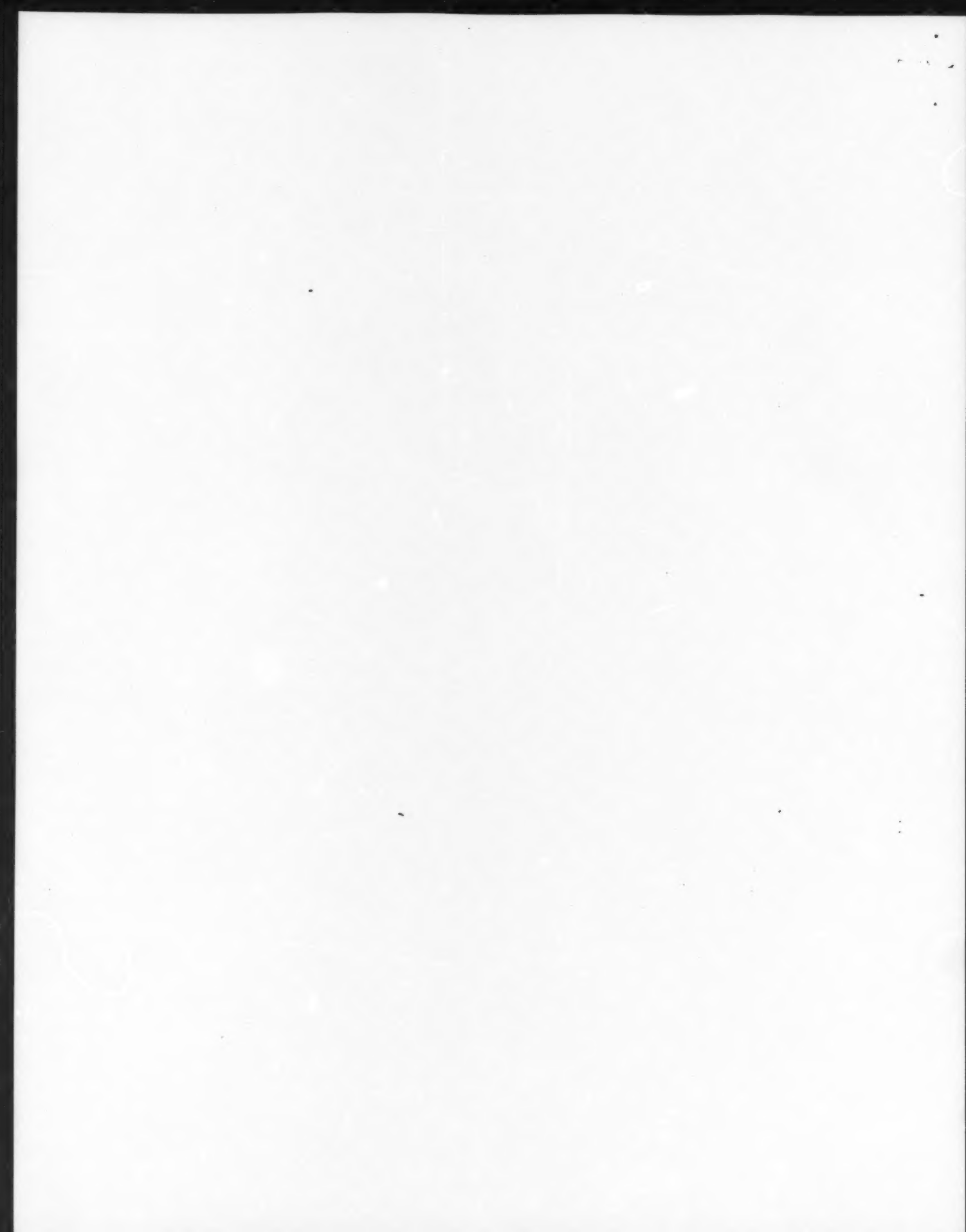
The utter need for fresh air, clean water and rich soil. The environment keeps getting worse, it is being abused. There is so much dirty air and dirty water. It is happening all over the world. Safe, stable, and healthy environment encourages youth to live in healthy ways.

Healthy Child Development

Development in the first few years is crucial.

Things to think about:

- What other factors influence the health and well-being of young people?
- What initiatives can be promoted that impact on these factors?
- How should HPPB encourage and support these initiatives?



Appendix 6

EAHV: Youth Empowerment and Health Understanding A Think-Tank on Youth Health Issues

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